

**A LOCAL CHURCH'S PERSPECTIVE ON  
THE NEED FOR TEEN SEX  
EDUCATION**

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**Doctor of Ministry, 2008  
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**ABSTRACT**  
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The objective of this doctoral project is to increase congregational and community awareness regarding sexual relationships among high school students. The author's goal is to create a dialogue between students, parents, church, and community leaders. He believes creating a forum for discussion among different groups will lead to a better understanding of God's intentions for sex and marriage. The author used questionnaires, surveys, sermons, workshops, and small group meetings to communicate to the Church and community.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This project is designed to help increase the congregation and community awareness regarding sexual relationships among high school students. This project will create a dialogue between students, parents, churches, and community leaders. This forum is necessary for discussion among different groups, which will lead to a better understanding of God's intentions for sex and marriage. The author has the privilege of working on a project in which he has a vested interest. He has served in ministry for several years in the project area, and as an adolescent lived in the area. Due to his longstanding commitment to help revitalize the far-east area of Columbus, Ohio, through spiritual programs and economic development, he is fortunate to have gained the respect of peers and residents. The author has demonstrated ministerial leadership which has affected the lives of many residents in the area. Young people can identify with the author since he previously lived in the same neighborhood and never succumbed to drugs, crime, or violent living. It is through his counsel and conversation many of them feel comfortable talking about the challenges and struggles they grapple with in their lives. Politicians and other civic leaders have consulted with him about the problems erupting in this area of town

There are different views on premarital sex within the Christian community. This document represents the views of Living Word Bible Fellowship which is a non-denominational church. Living Word Bible Fellowship supports the idea of sexual relations taking place only inside of marriage. The church believes that the scriptures identify premarital sex as sin and that believers should refrain from sex outside of the marriage bond. The church is located in an urban area of Columbus, Ohio, known as the

far-east side. The surrounding community is made up of middle-class single family housing. The age demographic of the congregation is represented mostly by members who are between the ages 8 months to age 65. The connection that the author has with Living Word Bible Fellowship is that he serves as Senior Pastor. One of the challenges the Church faces is the number of youths who are still in high school and have become teenage parents. The Church has been confronted with coming up with new ideas and reshaping its focus to address this issue. Living Word Bible Fellowship is attempting to make its mark regarding quality ministries, by trying to establish programs that make a difference in people of all races, genders, and ages.

It is important to document several denominational views on premarital sex. According to the American Baptist, “Christian disciple’s choices about singleness, marriage, parenthood, and living in conventional, intentional family arrangements, are to be made soberly with prayer and as integral parts of the Christian’s response to God’s call in Jesus Christ. American Baptist believes the competence of the individual soul determines God’s will in such matters through the reading and interpreting of scripture, through dialogue with God, by considering the teaching and counsel of the Christian community, and seeking and testing the wisdom of sisters and brothers in Christ.”<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Church teaches that situations where sex occurs outside of marriage “offend against the dignity of marriage; they destroy the very idea of the family; they weaken the sense of fidelity. They are contrary to the moral law. The sexual act must take place exclusively within marriage. Outside of marriage it always constitutes a grave sin

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<sup>1</sup> American Baptist Church, Policy statement on Family Life, Adopted by the General Board of American Baptist, [www. Beliefnet.com](http://www.Beliefnet.com), Retrieved on 2007-21-07



excluding one from sacramental communion.”<sup>2</sup> The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America “believes the Orthodox Church remains faithful to the biblical and traditional norms regarding premarital sexual relations between men and women. The only appropriate and morally fitting place for the exercise of sexual relations to the teachings of the Church is marriage.”<sup>3</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) position on promiscuity states that “having casual sexual relations is sinful because it does not proceed from or contribute to respect, intimacy, and care of the other. Promiscuity is inconsistent with our identity as Christians.”<sup>4</sup> Mormons believe that sexual relations are permitted only with one’s spouse of legal marriage. In addition, chastity encompasses more than sex itself. According to the Mormon policy statements, “the most common sexual sins our young people commit are necking and petting. Not only do these improper relations often lead to fornication, (unwed) pregnancy, and abortions, but it is often difficult for youth to distinguish where one ends and another begin.”<sup>5</sup> The teachings of the Presbyterian Church (USA) state that “total intimacy should happen in a relationship of total commitment, which marriage is intended to be. Presbyterians advocate responsible behavior, understood as sexual expression that matches the seriousness and permanence of the relationship.”<sup>6</sup> According to the Southern Baptist

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<sup>2</sup>Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 6, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [www. Beliefnet.com](http://www.Beliefnet.com), Retrieved on 2007-21-07

<sup>3</sup>Antichian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, “What Orthodox Christians Believe: Premarital Sex, [www.antichian.org](http://www.antichian.org)

<sup>4</sup>Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Sexuality: Policy adopted by the Church Council of ELCA, November 9, 1996, [www. Beliefnet.com](http://www. Beliefnet.com), Retrieved on 2007-21-07

<sup>5</sup>Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Gordon E. Hinkley, Statement on Family Life, 1998, P. 71

Presbyterian Church (USA) “What Presbyterians Believe” 210<sup>th</sup> GA Committee Report, p.33, July 8, 1998

Convention's Faith and Message, procreation is a gift from God, a precious trust reserved for marriage."<sup>7</sup>

Sexual education is a volatile subject in America. The subject and whether it should be taught in churches, public schools, and at what ages, is debated throughout our country. There is also a large debate of the church's role in teaching sex education and whether or not this teaching is effective. Does it work or simply encourage young people to have sex without risks? Some believe that sex education tells teenagers, "We know you are going to have sex; just so you do not get pregnant, or get infected with an STD, here are some condoms."<sup>8</sup> There are different organizations that embrace teenage sex education however; they may approach it from the perspective of safe sex. Planned Parenthood, for a number of years, has been educating young people of different age groups about the necessity of safe sex. This approach is different and more controversial than how religious organizations view sex education. Planned Parenthood will not talk about abstinence and will encourage the youth to use contraceptives.<sup>9</sup> These two philosophies support the need for sex education however, their approach to delivering this message go in two different directions.

Churches across America contain a diverse membership that spreads across racial, gender, age, and economic boundaries. We can never assume that one teen is afforded the same opportunities as another. Most churches have within them a large number of two-parent families. However, they also have equally as large number of single-parent families. Teenagers from two-parent families have a lower frequency of pregnancy than

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<sup>7</sup>Southern Baptist Convention, Policy adopted by the Convention in 1999, [www. Beliefnet.com](http://www.Beliefnet.com), Retrieved on 2007-21-07

<sup>8</sup>"Ibid"

<sup>9</sup>Planned Parenthood, Federation of America, New York, NY 10019

those teenagers from single parent families. Parental income is also a determining factor in the teenage birth rate. Children born to two-parent households achieve a higher educational level than children born to a single parent.<sup>10</sup>

Yasmin Alibhai-Brown suggests that some minority communities have lower pregnancy rates that are almost nonexistent because of strong familial modeling.<sup>11</sup> He gives a succinct reasoning of the factors: "...but from years of working with these groups, I know that young people (from strong family bonds) do not drink as much as those in the indigenous population, nor do they believe that they must have sex because 'that is what teenagers do.'<sup>12</sup> Sex within marriage is the expectation (from the parents) and young women especially hold to this because they know that they will be the ones to pay a high price if they surrender to desire. Even among the poorest in these communities, these values remain strong.

It is time to examine the possible linkage between media portrayal of sex and adolescent sexual behavior. One of the causes contributing to underage sex, as pointed out by several research studies, was the prevalence of the media glorifying sex without showing the consequences of unprotected sex.<sup>13</sup> Some suggest that Hollywood is watering down its movie rating process. Movies that would have been R rated movies five years ago, are now considered to be a PG-13. Many ascertain that the media is a strong contributor to the moral decline of America and the resultant pregnancy wave. Supporters of this theory argue that the media is most definitely part of the overall

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<sup>10</sup> Edin, Kathryn & Maria Kefalas *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*, 2005, University of California Press.

<sup>11</sup> Brown-Alibhai, Yasmin, *Some of My Best Friends Are...*, 2005, Methuen, Inc.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Kunkel, Dale, et al, *Sexual Messages on Television Comparing Findings from Three Studies*, *The Journal of Sex Research*, 1999, p.230-236

problem of early sexual intercourse. Whatever techniques gain favor, experts say the results may be slight unless adults and the entertainment media reinforce an anti-sexual revolution message.<sup>14</sup> In the author's observation, the local church has a responsibility to reinforce this sex education message to youth, as well as the consequences of sexual relationships outside of wedlock.

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<sup>14</sup> Reich, Wilhelm, *The Sexual Revolution*, New York, Orgone Institute Press, 1995, p. 129-149

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

How does one combine the context of his calling and Living Word Bible Fellowship? The Church is committed to providing an environment where young people can learn about issues that help make an impact on their lives. In this atmosphere, spiritual, social, and cultural concerns are addressed in a way in which young people can understand. The author was born and raised in the neighborhood which the foundation of this research takes place. Growing up, the author experienced a home which displayed a husband and wife who were very happy and loving inside their marriage. However, in a short period of time this thought faded away and what had looked like a dream marriage had now become a nightmare. By age 7, the author was being raised only by his mother. His father decided to move out of town and had no contact with him or his younger brother. He believed his father wanted to relive the days when he was a bachelor and not have the baggage of two boys holding him down. Throughout the author's family, he was noticing that most of his cousin and relatives were in homes where only the mother raised the children alone. The entire family was growing but none of the men raised their own children. Even if a relative had their father living with them, the father may have been there physically but not emotionally. During the elementary school days, the author and his brother would come home from school and spend the rest of the afternoon and evening with his aunt and her family. This was a large family of children made up of four boys and two girls. Each day all the kids would play basketball, jump rope or just hang- out outside.

When six o'clock rolled around everyone, would get quiet and the tension began to fill the room, due to the anticipation of the author's uncle. This gentleman was guaranteed to get drunk each evening when he arrived home from work. He drank until nine each evening and then would leave to go to a home of a friend. This picture of manhood tattooed itself on the author's mind. He figured why would someone feel the need to get married to a person just because they got pregnant when they were young and the other person never display any feelings of love towards them. The author watched each day as this man physically and emotionally abused his wife and children.

The author's additional uncles took over the role of providing tips on how he should be a man. They were just a few years older than him and constantly bragged about the number of women they slept with and even suggested how the author was a punk or homosexual if he was unwilling to do the same things they were doing. Later middle school and early high school years the author became very promiscuous with the females in his neighborhood. Certain females would allow you to do sexual things with them and did not mind if you were not dating.

In the author's junior year in high school he was dating a young lady that had just graduated the previous year. He never had a relationship with anyone like this and was enjoying spending time with her. The relationship became so serious that family and friends thought he was abandoning some of the other priorities in his life. The way he felt about her he did not mind if he was not with his friends, all he wanted to do was spend his available time with this young lady. One day, after just getting home from school, he received a call from a close friend who shared with him that

prior to dating this young lady she had a reputation of being with quite a few guys sexually. The author was hurt and did not know how to respond. He made a few calls to people he knew and discovered that the comment was true. Feeling hurt and with no other options, he decided to break up with this young lady that he cared for so much. A few days later, he received a call from the young lady saying that she was pregnant and that the child was his. He was without words and did not know how he would share this with his mother and father. He was still in school and had no way of supporting a child. The young lady mentioned to him that she would rather have an abortion rather than raise another child. After discussing each of their opinions about whether or not she should get an abortion, the young lady admitted that she was never pregnant. This situation made a lasting reflection on the author and how he was to move forward in relationships. First, he discovered that sex was more pure in a relationship where two people loved each other. Second, he realized that he had no awareness on using protection while having sex. For one moment in his life, he realized that if she had been with so many guys, he was open to getting an STD or becoming a father at an early age. The author had no concept of a loving relationship between a husband and wife. He saw two people in a home that coexisted due to the things they acquired and the sons they had together. The divorce between the author's parents lasted about 5 years, but the effects on him and his younger brother have lasted a lifetime. The author has watched how his younger brother changes between the women he dates like the seasons in the year. Until the moment he gave his life to Christ did he discover the truth of relationships. In 1990 he made a commitment to God to live without sex until he was married. He believed based on his renewed

commitment to restrain from sex, God would faithfully raise up a woman that would be in his life for the remainder of his life. This commitment did not come without testing moments in dating people while still young and single. However, in 1995, the author married a woman that not only walked down the aisle with him in marriage, but walked into his life and gave him reason to work hard producing a healthy relationship. The author has been raised in Columbus, Ohio, and has lived mostly on the east side of town. He grew up in the neighborhood adjacent to where the Church is located, so many of the young people attend schools familiar with the author. He has participated in community events and has never been considered an outsider, rather as someone who is a product of the area. He personally benefited from the relationships established in the religious and business community.

In a short time, Living Word Bible Fellowship has gained the attention of people living on the east side of Columbus, Ohio. A primary goal of the church is its focus on evangelism and community revitalization. Evangelism carries out the spiritual mandate of the church, while community revitalization focuses on the physical and social needs of the community. The church has the responsibility to go beyond the four walls and make an impact in all types of ways. There are many churches in the area making an impact on the community; however, Living Word Bible Fellowship has had success in building its strength through the people who serve in the church. These individuals have been the trumpets that have sounded when the church needs to be hands-on in the community.

When most churches are worrying about building mega-worship buildings, Living Word Bible Fellowship holds true to its mission: making a spiritual impact in



the lives of the local area residents by investing in the youthful population. The church is currently in the planning stages of building a multi-purpose building that would include teenage activity rooms. The church is proactive in providing a place where young people can hang out and not worry about safety concerns. The residents in the area of the church have taken notice that Living Word Bible Fellowship is attempting to make an investment in the youth of that area. The church serves as role model for other business ventures. Hopefully, in the future, this continued effort will be attractive to other organizations and will prompt them into making a commitment to community revitalization.

Living Word Bible Fellowship is a new church in every sense of the word and has to continue to help its members grow in community commitment. It is an exciting time for the church to make its impact on community rebuilding. The strength the author gives to the context of Living Word Bible Fellowship has helped encourage a consistent process in his personal and spiritual journey. The author sees himself being a pioneer that can help shape some of these issues on the Columbus' east side. He can relate to 'the guys' who still hang out on the street corners because he lived in the same neighborhood. However, he can also relate to the corporate business arena. He believes his age is a great advantage in identifying and relating to the youth of this generation. They do not see him as someone so old and out of touch, rather they see him as a respected individual who still comprehends their language.

There are some benefits of presenting a teenage sex education message to the youth through the local church. This age group will begin to understand and relate their own personal experiences through worship. They will see themselves being

embraced by different generations, particularly as they are included in the decision making process of the church. The author understands now why he had to experience some of things he did in his life. He can now share with young people the advantages of having an education and holding onto those support mechanisms. When young people can talk with someone who has stood on the same ground and went through the same experiences, they begin to listen.

Older generations went through different experiences and have a tendency to preach to this group, rather than trying to connect or build a relationship. The author believes it is important that the local church provide a vehicle for the young, as well as senior members, to have the opportunity to develop as leaders for Christ. Everyone who considers themselves a believer should be given the opportunity to become a leader. Leadership is an activity that provides direction and influence in another life. The youth in this area of Columbus are extremely talented with leadership abilities. However, some have channeled that energy in the wrong direction. The author believes the experiences of his youth, education, positions in ministry, and a caring heart, have enabled him to better relate to teenagers and hopefully help them in understanding the decisions needed for being a responsible citizen.

## CHAPTER TWO

### STATE OF THE ART

Most people today who argue against premarital sex advocate sexual abstinence outside of marriage, including before the marriage, as something positive rather than negative. There are groups that encourage teens to abstain from premarital sex by promoting chastity or the virtues of chastity. Lauren Winner, in her book *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*, balances a journalistic report of how difficult chastity is for American Christians. In *Real Sex*, the author speaks candidly to Christians on the importance of chastity. Winner grounds her discussion of chastity in the scriptures. She confronts cultural lies about sex, and challenges how we talk about sex in the Church.<sup>1</sup>

Winner says, “Today chastity is too often regarded as something negative, as in anti-sexual inhibition. The chaste person is the one who is able to express his/her sexuality well in reaching out to touch others and be touched by them. The chaste person is the one who knows well the difference between affectionate and sexual touches.”<sup>2</sup> Complete sexual abstinence outside of marriage is seen by many as a requirement of holistic or properly-ordered love.<sup>3</sup> From a Christian perspective, Josh McDowell, *Why True Love Waits*, helps parents, youth workers, and teachers assist teens on how to resist the pressure to be sexually active before marriage.<sup>4</sup> McDowell helps prepare adults with answers and offers a solution to teens struggling to remain sexually pure in today’s

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<sup>1</sup> Winner, Lauren, *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*, 2005, Brazos Press, p.34

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> McDowell, Josh, *Why True Love Waits*, 2002, Tyndale House Publishers, p.88-94

culture. *Why True Love Waits* equips readers with emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual reasons to share with young people to help them resist sexual pressure.<sup>5</sup>

All of morality, including sexual morality, is related to loving God, oneself, and others in a properly-ordered way. Since chastity is the virtue that pertains to attitudes and behaviors concerning sex and sexuality, it basically requires what a properly-ordered love requires in the whole area of sex. It is, therefore, pertinent to ask, “What does properly loving God, oneself, and others require with respect to sex and sexuality?”<sup>6</sup>

Loving God includes seeking to do God’s will, to please him, in everything. Since God loves all people (his children) with an infinite love, we can express love back to God in the area of sexuality by respecting God’s purpose for sex inside of marriage. Relevant to this, we can consider why God created sex, as well as God’s plans concerning our redemption, including the sacrament of matrimony and other relationships “in the Lord.”<sup>7</sup>

Many people are convinced that premarital sex is wrong or immoral because those engaging in it do not and cannot properly respect the basic marital and procreative meanings of sexual relations. With regard to the Bible, McDowell suggests that it presents non-marital sexual relations, including fornication, as contrary to God’s will and plan for human sexuality and marriage.<sup>8</sup> The argument here is supported by a careful examination of biblical perspectives on sex, marriage, and love. Many Christians, who believe that the Bible is inspired by God and still relevant today, therefore conclude that fornication (including premarital sexual intercourse) is always contrary to God’s will. Christians support the idea of abstaining as something positive, in light of God knowing

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

and only wanting what is best for us.<sup>9</sup> According to Josh McDowell, “Hunger for an intimate relationship is built into each of us. We all want to love and be loved. Sex is merely the physical expression of that intimate love we seek, not the source for it.”<sup>10</sup>

In *A Christian View of Sex Within, Outside, and Before Marriage*, author Paul Ramsey, speaking specifically of an “engaged couple” says, “If they are really contemplating pre-marital sexual relations in the authentic moral meaning of this phrase, then they know that they are not yet ready to accept all that is implied in their unity in one-flesh.”<sup>11</sup> They know that their engagement to be married sometime in the future does not make marriage, precisely because they realize that the love they now have for the being and well—being of the other under concrete circumstances in which this has attained, does not make them as yet acknowledge and accept the responsibilities that should be honored in the use of their sexual powers. They know they would be taking more and offering less than love requires. They can only attempt to act as if they were married.”<sup>12</sup>

In *Sex and Sanctity of Life*, theologian William May, offers an engaging study of sex, in particular, the relationship between the natural and the spiritual dimension of human love and reproduction.<sup>13</sup> For those who question the common assumption of secular society about the body, human sexuality, courtship, marriage, family, and children, this book presents wise and beautiful insights into the human condition. May notes that although there may be some degree of tenderness, affection and concern in the

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<sup>9</sup> McDowell, Josh, *Why True Love Waits*, 2002, Tyndale House Publishers, p. 105-108

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Ramsey, Paul, *One Flesh: A Christian View of Sex Within, Outside and Before Marriage*, Grove Books, 1975, p.18

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> May E. William, *Sex and Sanctity of Life*, 2003 Christendom Press

sexual relationship of the nonmarried there is something tragic.<sup>14</sup> He says, “The evil that is present is there precisely because the persons involved are not married. They have not given themselves to one another through an act of free choice. They have not established the uniqueness and exclusivity of each other.”<sup>15</sup>

Beth Robinson, *Sex: Helping Church Teens Deal with Challenging Issues*, does a wonderful job in this book capturing the essentials that youth leaders need for effective ministry.<sup>16</sup> She offers real situations and then processes the situation so an individual can apply what is taught on the subject. Robinson discusses topics that many churches and youth ministries confront such—as sexual abuse, homosexuality, and sexual activities.<sup>17</sup> Beth Robinson formulates the basic principle of Christian sexual morality as: “We ought so to engage in the natural sexual activity of body, mind, and heart.” She says that a certain falsehood is involved in fornication, when two unmarried people, even though perhaps engaged, have sexual intercourse with each other. Robinson continues by saying, “that the sexual union of two unmarried people can never represent God’s relationship with his people; it can never represent ‘Christ in His union with the Church’ or ‘the Church, to whom Christ has given the Holy Spirit to keep forever.’”<sup>18</sup>

In *The Family: An Introduction*, J. Ross Eshelman introduces key theoretical perspectives on families. Eshleman reflects on the most current data and uses cross-cultural comparisons to present the most comprehensive coverage of the family.<sup>19</sup> The book uses a variety of theoretical frameworks, structural conflicts, interactionism,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, Beth, *Sex: Helping Church Teens Deal with Challenging Issues*, 2003, Covenant Publishing, p.45-55

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Eshelman, J Ross, *The Family: An Introduction*, Boston, Allyn and Bacon, Inc. 11<sup>th</sup> ed., 2005, p.355-360

exchange, developmental processes, and feminism to describe and analyze society's contemporary, diverse, and none—traditional family lifestyles. Eshleman says, "If one's spouse has had premarital sexual relations with someone else, then one may feel insecure about his or her fidelity." Some researchers have found premarital sexual relationships to be highly related to extramarital relationships. Voluntarily having premarital sex may contribute to a future openness to having sex with someone to whom one is not bound by marriage. This is the disposition that can influence having sex with someone else outside of the bounds of marriage.<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Meg Meeker, *Epidemic: How Teen Sex Is Killing Our Kids*, addresses an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases that, in some cases, have increased more than 500% in recent years.<sup>21</sup> In this groundbreaking book, she examines in detail the threat of these diseases and the causes for their widespread advancement among teens, including birth control, reliance on condoms, the media, sex education, early start, confusion, and the teen body.<sup>22</sup> About 25% of sexually—experienced adolescents become infected each year.<sup>23</sup> A wide variety of diseases can be transmitted through sexual intimacy. Some diseases, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoiiasis, and syphilis, generally are cured quite easily if they are detected and treated early. Viral infections such as HPV (human papilloma virus), genital herpes, hepatitis B and HIV cannot be cured and can be transmitted to sexual partners even years after the initial infection. Over 56 million Americans are estimated to be infected with a viral STD other than HIV.<sup>24</sup> Some STDs such as chlamydia are hard to detect. HPV is a non-curable virus that can lead to

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Meeker, Meg, M.D., *Epidemic: How Teen Sex Is Killing Our Kids*, Lifeline Press, p. 27-43

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

developing cancer of the cervix. Hepatitis B increases a person's chances of getting liver cancer. This means that AIDS is not the only STD that can lead to a premature death. Condoms are often promoted as a means to "safe" or "safer" sex. However, they are not always an effective means of birth control and are not the safest form of protection against STDs.<sup>25</sup> Pregnancy can only take place during a few days of a woman's menstrual cycle, during the ovulation, whereas STDs can be transmitted at any time. Although it may be safe to say that the use of a condom reduces the risk of transmission of some STDs, including AIDS by sexual intercourse involving an infected partner, the risks are still possible.<sup>26</sup> An STD can seriously harm or destroy the health, life, and fertility of a healthy relationship. If a person enters into a marriage and has not been honest about their past sexual relationships, and possibly has an STD, this could disrupt a God—loving meaningful relationship.<sup>27</sup>

Author Douglas, Kirby, *Reflections on Two Decades of Research on Teen Sexual Behavior and Pregnancy*, focuses this article on integrating school health programs within the larger community in which the school is a part.<sup>28</sup> Kirby gives less emphasis to the health program within the school because that topic turns up in other articles. This article addresses issues related to health programs being applied in community settings. For over 20 years, Douglas Kirby has been researching sex education programs designed to reduce unprotected sex. Increased national concern about teen sex has subscribed to the belief that sex education programs work.<sup>29</sup> They can provide American youth with

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Douglas, Kirby, *Reflections on Two Decades of Research on Teen Sexual Behavior and Pregnancy*, 1999, *Journal of School Health*, American School Health Association, v. 69, p.89

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



needed information about sexual behavior and contraceptives. Kirby says that at the beginning of his research, HIV/AIDS was not known, and not a part of our concerns in America. Generally, the important issues centered on other STDs. However, now there is a strong movement to educate American teens on HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, and other risk factors involving unprotected sex.<sup>30</sup>

Ellen Freeman and Karl Rickles in *Early Childbearing: Perspectives of Black Adolescent on Pregnancy, Abortion, and Contraception*, show why teens wait until after their first sexual encounter to obtain contraception, and reveal the correlation between family involvement and the pregnancy or no pregnancy decision.<sup>31</sup> They compare teenagers who terminated their first pregnancy with those who delivered babies. Freeman and Rickles offer encouragement to educators, healthcare professionals, and youth leaders to assist teenagers in improving their health and well-being.<sup>32</sup> Pregnancy as a result of premarital sex results in many problems or difficulties for both the young man and woman. Within a loving, committed marriage, there are meaningful experiences that contribute to the entire family experience. Even though married couples have some challenging moments in their relationship as a parent, it is more problematic for the non-married parents.<sup>33</sup> Usually, these young parents have not completed school and have no job-readiness experience. They are often not ready to be parents—financially, emotionally, and in other ways.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Freeman, W., Ellen & Karl Rickels, *Early Childbearing: Perspectives of Black Adolescent on Pregnancy, Abortion, and Contraception*, 1993, Sage Publications, Inc.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

In “*When you Divide Body and Soul Problems Multiply: The Black Church and Sex. In Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality*”. Michael Dyson offers personal reflections on how the black church needs to recover erotic uses of black bodies from the “distortions” of white racism and the traps of black exploitation.<sup>35</sup> He reviews the historical depictions of black bodies and argues that during and after slavery, blacks resisted negative views of sexuality.<sup>36</sup> He believes that black women resisted sexual domination by abortion, abstinence, and infanticide, interrupting “white pleasure and profit one body at a time. Dyson argues that a significant mode of resistance came through participation in black religion, despite that fact that these churches often began with a very conservative sexual theology.”<sup>37</sup>

Dyson’s article attacks the unchanged conservative sexual theology that does not address the sexual exploitation of black women and children, homosexuality, and the rise of AIDS in the black community.<sup>38</sup> He believes the black church should build on celebration of the body and a theology of eroticism and homoeroticism. The theology is necessary to free black Christians from sexual repression and address issues like teenage pregnancy, AIDS, and heterosexism. He argues that a pattern for the reunion of the mind-body is found in black music and that black churches should find in its worship experience a reunion of sexuality and spirituality.<sup>39</sup> Dyson’s focus is on remedying the black church in which the majority of the church is female. While the minority male leadership continues to reinforce sexual inequality of black women, he believes that the

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<sup>35</sup> Moultrie, Monique, Ph.D, Literature Review on Michael Eric Dyson, “In Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality, Sexual Ethics Project, Brandis University

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

leaders of black churches must take the lead in reforming its sexual theology.<sup>40</sup> These new leaders need to promote an honest overhaul of the heterosexist tendencies of congregations and instead advocate for healthy sexual relationships. He concludes with the notion that black churches need sexual healing and that through this healing it can retain its role as the “balm in Gilead” for black people.<sup>41</sup>

Wendy Flint’s book, *The Parent’s Right to Know: The Facts about Family Life Sex Education*, presents many of the basics of family life, education, national strategies, the players in the field, and other relevant data.<sup>42</sup> She postulates that if parents are well-informed and really care for their children, they would try their best to influence their children not to engage in premarital sex.<sup>43</sup> Flint points out a few ways that parents can be hurt by their children having premarital sex: “First, the parents may feel the child is bringing them embarrassment, they feel hurt for themselves. They take the child’s disobedience toward God as a personal blow. Second, the parents may be hurt on the child’s behalf.”

Dr. James Dobson, a widely-recognized expert on the family says that sexual energy is analogous to nuclear energy. In his book, *Emotions: Can You Trust Them?* He believes the same energy that holds an atom together can also cause great destruction.<sup>44</sup> When sexual energy is released only within the family, it draws a man and a woman together to form a stable partnership and motivates them to raise their children in a responsible way.<sup>45</sup> When a society is made up of many such stable and responsible family

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Flint, Wendy, *The Parent’s Right to Know: The Facts About Family Life Sex Education*, The American Parents Association

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Dobson, James, 2003, *Emotions: Can You Trust Them*, Regal Books

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

units the society will also be a stable and responsible. However, when sexual energy is released outside the family, it tends to be used irresponsibly and can lead to much harm and destruction—illegitimate births, heartbreaks, shattered personalities, abortions, disease and even death.<sup>46</sup>

Delbert Weins and Kelly Douglas in their book, *Propriety, Purity, and Partnership*, write about a sexual crisis in our culture and our communities.<sup>47</sup> They feel the church's responses are proving to be inadequate. Homosexuality has dominated the discussions in the church, with fewer discussions on what it means to be a sexual being. They write that the concepts of propriety, purity, and partnership can guide attitudes toward sexuality and help build strong Christian marriages.<sup>48</sup> Propriety ensures a model of conduct that is acceptable to both parties. Purity, according to Christ, emphasizes spiritual wholeness. They make a valid point that the chastity message is not necessarily a religious one; it is a common-sense solution to a number of social problems, including violence against women, failed relationships, and the destruction of a teen life.<sup>49</sup> Weins and Douglas say, "A condom can not heal a broken heart."<sup>50</sup> The chastity message tells teens their future happiness and well-being is more important than a few minutes of pleasure. Having a firm conviction that premarital sex is contrary to God's will can be helpful, especially in times of temptation. Since this behavior is according to God's plan, it makes the believer more receptive to the fruits of God's spirit. The individual becomes a better person, a caring friend, and an effective minister of God's love to others. If one is

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Weins, Delbert & Kelly Douglas, *Propriety, Purity, and Partnership*, 1998, *The Other Side Magazine*, v. 34, p.14

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

a Christian, whether or not he or she is married, chastity makes one a better follower, witness, and friend of Jesus.<sup>51</sup>

By abstaining sexually outside of marriage, people avoid all the actual and possible consequences associated with premarital sex. In the book, *The Unauthorized Guide to Sex and Church*, author Carmen Berry takes on subjects such as abortion, homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, and the response to child abuse scandals.<sup>52</sup> This book traces sexual attitudes and practices in Hebrew culture as presented in the Old Testament, Berry poses questions such as “Why is the Church unable to present a united front on issues like marriage, divorce, and premarital sex.”<sup>53</sup> Berry writes that one is *free* from the many worries, complications, and problems associated with the consequences of premarital sex.<sup>54</sup> If the abstinence-practicing individual is young or immature, he or she avoids the possibility of facing certain responsibilities (parental) for which he or she is not yet ready. Energy and attention can be focused on developing healthy friendships, relationships “in the Lord,” or preparing for a future career, marriage, and other goals. Sexual abstinence in premarital relationships tends to foster better communications and getting to know each other in other ways.<sup>55</sup> If the parties discover they are not well intended for each other it is easier for them to break up if they have not been sexually involved. Berry suggests that a person, who abstains from sexual relations outside of marriage and tries to grow in their relationship with God, can experience real peace of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Berry, R, Carmen, *The Unauthorized Guide to Sex and Church*, 2005, W. Publishing Group

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

conscience. Trying to live according to God's will and give glory to God, with one's body, can contribute to a healthy sense of one's worth.<sup>56</sup>

There are a number of individual researchers and organizations that encourage teenage sex education, however as mentioned in the introduction groups such as Planned Parenthood advocate for "safe sex."<sup>57</sup> Planned Parenthood, one of the leading advocates of sex education, pointed out that teens who graduated from their program were more likely to use birth control<sup>58</sup>. Planned Parenthood does not encourage teens to abstain from sex outside of marriage, as this would violate the "separation of church and state." They explain teens are going to have sex regardless of what their parents or teachers tell them, the only practical thing to do is try to reduce the damage when they do decide to have sex.<sup>59</sup> Planned Parenthood defines "Comprehensive Education" as a program that includes (biology of reproduction, coping with sexual development, different types of birth control, preventing sexual abuse, abortion, and where to get contraceptives).<sup>60</sup> This is a challenging view from our Church perspective. It encourages premarital sex just as long as the young person uses birth control while having sexual relations.<sup>61</sup> Our church view of sex education teaches the young person to have sex in a healthy relationship. Planned Parenthood does not consider the emotional and spiritual impact having sex has on a teenage youth. This organization does a great job educating on the different components which happen during sexual intercourse and sexually transmitted diseases. However, "safe sex" is not a guarantee that unfortunate consequences can still occur. Our

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Planned Parenthood, Federation of America

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

faith-community does not assume that teenage youth are incapable of making wise decisions regarding sexual relationships. If teens are given the information and proper resources, they can have healthy relationship with peers without needing the ammunition for having sex.

Thomas Lickona research approaches teenage sex education from a different perspective than others previously mentioned. In his book *“Where Sex Education Went Wrong,”* Lickona argues that students are currently empowered, but we have failed to teach that along with the power comes responsibility.<sup>62</sup> He offers many examples and statistics showing the decline of values of our youth. Some of the areas are violence, vandalism, and bad language, and sexual promiscuity, peer cruelty, stealing, and cheating.<sup>63</sup> Lickona blames much of the decline on parents who “do not meet basic physical and emotional needs of children.” According to Lickona, morality is easily defined as two simple values that we all share: respect and responsibility.<sup>64</sup> Lickona offers these values as a cure for many of society’s ills. In the author’s faith context, the community would accept part of the suggestions that Lickona makes in his book.<sup>65</sup> Our church would agree that including young people inside of the sex education discussion is important and provides them with the process of decision-making. This approach would better equip them in learning how to make right choices in the future. However, Lickona perspective gives the young person decision-making power in which they may not be mature to make. The author agrees that youth should be involved in discussions, however they are heavily influenced by pop culture, peers, and lack of life experiences. Their

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<sup>62</sup> Lickona, Thomas, *Where Sex Education Went Wrong*, Educational Leadership, vol. 51, p.84-89, Nov. 1993

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

decisions need the guidance of their family, teachers, and religious leaders. This approach to teen sex education is different from most previous mentioned researchers and theologians. Lickona suggest young people and mentors role-play situations in order to learn how to behave when the situation arises.<sup>66</sup> The author supports this idea with it being done with a mission, to educate with a conscience to bring about a moral change. Without a moral or spiritual mission this forum would lead to a variety of values being exchanged. For example, Planned Parenthood involves discussion with youth, teachers, and parents; however there is not moral or spiritual element to their education.<sup>67</sup> Youth gain needed information without the moral compass which helps guide them in real life situations. Our faith community would have concerns that the level of participation that Lickona suggest may display a shallow dialogue between youth and educators. Morality is sacrificed for the sake of creating a democratic learning environment.

Opponents of sex education raise a variety of charges; Cindy Patton documents in an article in *TIME* Magazine, Psychiatrist James Parsons opposes any sex education involving young children. Parson says forcing sex education on youth can cause them to become “over stimulated and obsessed” with sex and can produce perversion in adults.<sup>68</sup> Parson argues that these topics should not be discussed in schools, rather they should be taught in the home with the guidance of the youth’s parents.<sup>69</sup> Our church believes that sex education can be presented in a mutual safe environment. Some opponents of sex education have had challenges with using the school system and other government funded institutions. The church provides not only the environment, but provides

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Patton, Cindy, *TIME* Magazine, Fatal Advice-How Safe Education Went Wrong, July 25, 1969



information that can lessen the idea of perverse topics or actions. Opponents of sex education have argued sex education programs encourage sexual activity. The author has discovered students who have been provided moral and spiritual directed information regarding sexual relationships have made healthier sexual decisions.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The African American church has been the most important social institution in the African—American community. The term “Black Church” refers to a number of<sup>1</sup> predominately African-American Christian churches that minister to the needs of the African-American communities. While there are predominately African-American denominations, many of these churches are members of predominately white denominations. Churches within these denominations have enabled African-Americans to worship in their own culturally distinct ways and assume positions of leadership denied to them in mainstream America.<sup>2</sup> African-American churches traditionally have provided political leadership and served social welfare functions, such as providing literacy programs, establishing schools, childcare centers, food pantries, and other social programs.<sup>3</sup>

The Black church has been and continues to be a powerful force in the African-American community. It is important to note that the truth of God’s Word was not revealed to the African-American for the first time on the southern plantations. However, prior to the Atlantic slave ship voyages Africans had grasped the Christian religion.<sup>4</sup> Christianity had never been a foreign religion to the African. In his book, “The Early Church in Africa,” Dr. John Mbiti outlines the fact that the message of Jesus penetrated

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<sup>1</sup> Adul, Alkalimat and Associates, *Religion and Black Church* 6<sup>th</sup> Introduction to Afro-American Studies, Chicago, Twenty-first Century Books and Publications, p. 207-225

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Sutton, Charyn D., 1992, “Pass It On: Outreach to minority communities, *Big Brother/Big Sisters of America*, p. 32-33

<sup>4</sup> *African Religions & Philosophy*, John Mbiti, 1992, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Heinemann, p. 52-68

Africa before it ever reached Europe.<sup>5</sup> Dr. Mbiti says, “Christianity in Africa is so old that it can be rightly described as a traditional African religion.”<sup>6</sup>

Part of the rationalization of the slave trade was to “civilize” and “Christianize” the Africans. Missionary efforts among the slaves were allowed because owners assumed that Christianity would make slaves better workers.<sup>7</sup> While the Bible did teach, “Slaves, Obey your earthly masters with respect and fear,” it also said, “And masters, treat your slaves in the same way.” Slaves often learned about Christianity by attending services led by a white preacher or supervised by a white person.<sup>8</sup> In such settings, whites used Bible stories such as the Curse of Ham to justify slavery. They promoted the idea that loyal and hard-working slaves would be rewarded in the after—life. The slave discovered that the slavery alluded to in the Bible was substantially different from what they were experiencing.<sup>9</sup> Most masters wanted their slaves to submit to the commands of Scripture but were unwilling to live by those commands themselves. The slaves discovered this contradiction but did not allow that to interfere with receiving the truth of the Bible. Mibit says, “In its pages the slave found hope, courage, strength, and comfort.”<sup>10</sup> This type of faith encouraged leaders to respond courageously to the problems of slaves. Leaders such as, Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Sojourner Truth, and thousands of black men enlisted in the Union Army to fight for their freedom.<sup>11</sup> Slave revolts in the early 1800s, often inspired by other passages in the Bible or by black preachers, led to laws

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Isichei, Elizabeth, 1995, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present*, Eerdmans Publishing, p.210-220

<sup>8</sup> Africans in America: The Black Church, Retrieved on 2007-07-21

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> *African Religions & Philosophy*, John Mbiti, 1992, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Heinemann, p. 52-68

<sup>11</sup> Abdul Alkalimat and Associates, *Religion and Black Church*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Introduction to Afro-American Studies, Chicago, Twenty-first century books and publishing, p. 207-225

barring black churches and black preachers. Slaves organized underground churches and hidden religious meetings where slaves were free to mix evangelical Christianity with African beliefs and African rhythms and turn traditional hymns into spirituals.<sup>12</sup> The underground churches provided psychological refuge from the white world and the spirituals gave the church members a secret way to communicate and, in some cases, to plan rebellion. In 1831, Nat Turner, a slave and a Baptist preacher, killed about 50 white men, women, and children in an armed rebellion in Virginia.<sup>13</sup> Slaves were experiencing liberation through the inspired Word of God. Southern states noticed this liberation and began placing restrictions on missionary activity, bible readings, and preaching by slave preachers.<sup>14</sup> These restrictions did not discourage the slave and worship. The spiritual “Steal Away” signaled the calling of a worship service to be held in the “hush arbors” outside of the view of the master and overseers.<sup>15</sup>

This analysis of the “Black Church” must take into account the concrete conditions within which they exist. The main forms of the “Black Church” and the religious experience of African American people have changed during the three main periods of African American history.<sup>16</sup> The slave trade represented a disruption in the religious life of the American slave who was born in Africa. During slavery the Christian religion provided a different and necessary social outlet. It helps to create solidarity and structured religious life among blacks who were slaves.<sup>17</sup> The Bible was constantly used to teach slaves a submissive orientation and a “divine” God-given justification for their

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

conditions that allowed the slave to worship within a nearby environment with the plantation owners.<sup>18</sup> These slave masters would never allow organization to develop among the slaves. Studies show out that there was a determined effort on the part of Plantation owners to prevent any resurgence of African religion. The religious practices of the slaves flourished beyond the watchful eyes of the slave owner and overseers.<sup>19</sup>

Slavery also defined the status of free blacks. In White churches, former slaves were denied equality and continually were subjected to racist abuse. In 1787, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones led a group in establishing the first African-American denomination – Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). Religious leaders like Allen and Jones spoke out against slavery.<sup>20</sup> Theologian James Cone says “the basic message of these religious leaders is that slavery contradicts God; it is a denial of His will. They rejected White distortions of the gospels, which emphasized the obedience of slaves to the master’s. They contend that God willed their freedom and not their slavery. Black religious leaders focused on biblical passages that stressed God’s involvement in liberation of oppressed people.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Era of Reconstruction**

After emancipation, Northern churches founded by free blacks, as well as predominantly white denominations, sent missions to the South to minister to newly freed slaves. The AME and AME Zion churches gained hundreds of thousands of members.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Cone, James, *God of the Oppressed*, 1997, Orbis Books, p. 32-48

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

These churches blended elements from the underground churches with elements from freely established black churches.<sup>22</sup> Despite early efforts to integrate freed slaves into American society, racial segregation quickly became the norm in many states. The black communities, with the black churches as focal points, developed along lines partly independent of white communities. Black preachers provided leadership, encouraged education and economic growth, and were often the primary link between the black and white communities. The black church established and/or maintained the first black schools and encouraged community members to fund these schools and other public services.<sup>23</sup> Since the male hierarchy denied them opportunities for ordination, middle-class women in the black church organized missionary societies to address social issues. These societies provided job training and reading education, worked for better living conditions, raised money for African missions, wrote religious periodicals, and promoted Victorian ideals of womanhood, respectability, and racial uplift.<sup>24</sup>

In the rural period the end of slavery provided conditions under which the “invisible church” of the slaves merged with institutional churches of the free blacks.<sup>25</sup> In addition to AME churches, other major denominations were established: Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church established in 1870 and the National Baptist Convention, USA, which was established in 1880 and became the largest black denomination.<sup>26</sup> These and other new denominations increased in both size and importance. During the rural period, Black churches made significant contributions to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> We Shall Overcome: The Players, Retrieved on 2007-07-21

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, Charles S., *Growing Up in the Black Belt: Negro Youth In Rural South, 1941*, American Council on Education

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

social, economic, education, and political life in the African-American community.<sup>27</sup> The “Black Church” in the post civil war period helped foster a new sense of community and to evolve a system of beliefs and values that sustained the development of stable families. Charles S. Johnson in his study of black rural churches says “Among rural Negroes the church is still the only institution which provides an effective organization, and social activities. Additionally it provides a forum for expression on many issues and acts as outlet for emotional repressions for societal concerns.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Large and Storefront Churches**

Churchgoers who migrated from the south felt uncomfortable in large northern churches. They desired a more intimate church experience and joined smaller churches housed in rented stores or houses.<sup>29</sup> The history of the storefront church evolved in the 1940’s. These “storefront” churches, as the name suggest, were generally conducted in abandoned stores or houses located in predominately black neighborhoods. The storefront church began to represent an attempt on the part of new residents to establish a type of church in city that was once found in their previous southern environment.<sup>30</sup> These churchgoers wanted a church in which they were known among all the members of their church. In larger churches they may not lose their identity, the members nor did the pastor know them personally. This created bitterness to those who enjoyed church life,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Maffly-Kipp, Laurie F, 2001, *The Church in Southern Black Community*, Retrieved on 2007-

however found it difficult to survive anonymously.<sup>31</sup> They viewed the Pastor as someone who did not know them by name but only by the number on the envelope in which they paid their tithes. They desire to want more involvement and status in the “storefront church.”<sup>32</sup> The worship style in the “storefront” holds on to some traditional elements to which they are accustomed and found in the denominational church. However their dress code more relaxed and the members feel less restraint to wear the formal clothes traditionally worn in the larger churches. The preaching style of the Pastor in the “storefront” is drawn to dealing with the everyday life of the member. The traditional “hums” and “moans” from the black preacher in the larger church are no longer apart of the preaching style of the “storefront” preacher.<sup>33</sup> This preacher tends to talk about issues that may seem revolutionary or non-conformist. The “storefront” Pastor has no denominational board or church committee that evaluates his/her pastoral performance. This church has no documented church history.<sup>34</sup> Denominational freedom gives the Pastor the visionary guidance of the church and the ability to preach and teach items in life that affect the life of members within the congregation. People who found themselves in the “storefront church” were exhausted with the traditions of the large church that were not providing them with the joy and excitement they believed church life should provide.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



## Black Church and Social Issues

Neither the Emancipation Proclamation nor the North's victory in the Civil War ended the problems for the African—Americans living in America. After the hope and turmoil of the Reconstruction period, black Americans again found themselves being systematically and legally oppressed.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, once again, many who claimed to be Christians were involved in the reign of terror, which sought to keep African Americans in their place. The Southern white church was at best silent, and at worse, actively defending the conduct of those who were marauding among, intimidating, and lynching.<sup>37</sup>

The black community found refuge in the church. Although there were exceptions, like the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, the church provided some protection from those who would harm black people.<sup>38</sup> And in the church our people found the peace, comfort and strength previously cultivated in the hush arbors. The vibrancy and progressive power of the black church is well documented. It was in the churches that the black colleges were conceived, given birth, and prayed for. It was in the churches that a young and vibrant NAACP carried on its membership drives. It was the clergy who often provided the leadership for the black community at large.<sup>39</sup> The powerful building effect of the African-American church cannot be disputed. The God of the Bible has always been a source of comfort, strength, and hope for African—American

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<sup>36</sup> Abdul, Alkalimat and Associates; *Religion and Black Church*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Introduction to Afro-American Studies, Chicago: Twenty-first century books and publishing, p. 207-225

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

people. Faith in Jesus Christ has not created passivity but rather activism in thousands of African Americans.<sup>40</sup>

Black churches held a leadership role in the American Civil Rights Movement. Their history as centers of strength for the black community made them natural leaders in this moral struggle.<sup>41</sup> In addition, they had often served as links between the black and white worlds. Notable minister-activists included Rev Martin. Luther King, Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, Bernard Lee, Fred Shuttlesworth, and C.T. Vivian. The black church continues to be a source of support for members of the African—American community.<sup>42</sup> When compared to American churches as a whole, black churches tend to focus more on social issues such as poverty, gang violence, drug use, and racism.<sup>43</sup> A study found that black Christians were more likely to have heard about health care reform from their pastors than were white Christians. Black churches are typically very conservative on sexuality issues, such as homosexuality.<sup>44</sup>

Although black neighborhoods may suffer from civic disinvestment, with lower quality schools, less effective policing and fire protection. There are institutions that help to improve the physical and social capital of black neighborhoods.<sup>45</sup> In black neighborhoods the churches may be an important source of social cohesion. For some African Americans, the kind spirituality learned through these churches works as a protective factor against the corrosive forces of racism.<sup>46</sup> Churches may also do work to improve the physical infrastructure of the neighborhood. Churches throughout America

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<sup>40</sup> We Shall Overcome: The Players, Retrieved on 2007-07-21

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

have undertaken real estate ventures and renovated burnt out and abandoned houses to create new housing for residents.<sup>47</sup> Churches have fought for the right to operate their own schools in place of the often inadequate public schools found in many black neighborhoods.<sup>48</sup>

### Theoretical Perspectives

There are many philosophers and theologians who will agree that values can be known to be true or false. Young people may not have enough reason to judge what they should do and wisdom to predict what may happen. It may be ethically irresponsible to leave young people who do not have adequate knowledge to prevent various kinds of dangers, to the discretion of choosing their values. Dr. Kirschmann, *Why the Current Sex Education Does Not Work*, says "In terms of sex education personal value does not exist as far as sexual activities."<sup>49</sup> The consequences involve others such as partners, children, family, or even community. Kirschmann believes there should be some commitment and trust about sexual activity, otherwise how can a young person take responsibility for any unforeseen outcome.<sup>50</sup> The reality is there are a large number of youth who are sexually active. The local church in its efforts to promote sex education does not promote sexual activity, but if young people are active it needs to be with knowledge of their bodies, their feelings, and with shared responsibility with partner. Religious sex educators point out

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Kirschmann, *Why Current Sex Education Does Not Work*, Contemporary Problems I Paper, Taku, Ikemoto, April 24, 1995

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

that the home is still the primary place to learn about sex education, and the faith community should support parents in the task.<sup>51</sup>

Faith-based sex education is something that is being experienced across the nation, with the principle that sexuality is God-given. Rather than offering large amounts of do's and don'ts, church leaders are increasingly interested in helping young people see their sexuality in spiritual terms. Louis Palmer writes in the article *"Faith-based Sex Education Takes Hold In Churches, Temples in U.S.,"* students who grow up in a traditional religious environment are apart of a larger group of students being taught how to say no, when to say yes, and how to put on a condom when they do say yes.<sup>52</sup> Palmer believes that young people will understand their sexuality as something divine rather than something dirty. The idea suggests students learn how to be responsible steward's of all their God—given gifts. This takes spirituality out of the do and doesn't mindset and makes it a spiritual principle.<sup>53</sup>

Louis Palmer suggests the need for religious sex education which emphasizes the religious aspects of sexuality. He believes that religious educators want to compose literature that combines spirituality and sexuality together.<sup>54</sup> Young people are charged up sexually and are beginning to explore and this information may be a tool used to enhance their relationship with God and will raise their self-esteem. The information allows them to understand who they are both physically and spiritually.<sup>55</sup> Often each gender is use to sexuality or spirituality defining the essence of a person. Young men are

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Louis Palmer D. "Faith Based Sex Education Takes Hold in Churches, Temples across U.S. Unitarian Universalist Association, July 24, 2000

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

embraced by their peers and looked at as heroes if they have been with a large number of women. However, young women are categorized as very sexual if they have had sex with a large number of men. These two scenarios define or measure a person based on their sexual activity. Kris Gowen *"It Happened to Me,"* offers good, sound advice on highly personal level filling in some of the blanks in the knowledge about sex and relationships.<sup>56</sup> Gowen reiterates some of the same themes that Palmer suggests. He believes teens 16—19 can make their own decisions about their sexuality. When given the facts, teens are making decisions not to have sex for a variety of reasons. Most of which may include health risk or risk of pregnancy.<sup>57</sup> Palmer and Gowen represent sex educators who feel that if teens are equipped with the knowledge of sexual issues combined with a spiritual perspective they will eventually make the right choices.

Dr. Allen J. Moore in an article titled, *"Teen—Age Sexuality and Public Morality"* says, "the issue is not that sexual abstinence is not to be recommended but that it is not always practical for every teen-ager."<sup>58</sup> Moore believes that not all teens respond positively to moral absolutes, especially at a time when they are seeking to establish their independence. Most teens already know the traditional values towards sex. What they do not understand is the true nature of sexual desire and how to give direction to that desire.<sup>59</sup> Moore says "pro—family policies assume that sex education and frank open discussions of the facts of sexuality will contribute to increased teenage sexual activity".<sup>60</sup> He concludes by suggesting the church play a role in helping youth find

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<sup>56</sup> Gowen, Kris, *It Happen To Me*, Scarecrow Press, 2003

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Moore, Allen. *Teenage Sexuality and Public Morality*, Christianity Century, September 9, 1987, p. 747

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

constructive solutions to the confusions of sex. Particular attention should be paid to their Pastoral Care. Churches should advocate revisions in current sex education programs that are currently being used by churches. The revisions should take a look at how young people are taught how to make decisions. Past programs often assumed answers and did not allow young people the opportunity to practice making their own decisions within a safe climate.<sup>61</sup>

Robert Burney in the book *"The Dance of the Wounded Souls"* says a healthy romantic relationship is about two whole independent people choosing to become partners in the life journey for as long as that works for both of them.<sup>62</sup> Burney says due to the cultural dysfunction and emotional trauma all of us have experienced due to the human condition, we are never, in this lifetime, going to be a completely whole healthy person with no emotional wounds and we are never going to meet someone else that has no emotional wounds. It is not about getting "there" not about destination.<sup>63</sup> He mentions that it is about learning and growing on our journey. It is about making enough progress to have the capacity to enjoy "here" as much of the time as possible. Balance is a shifting, changing, constantly fluctuating dance, which we are learning to relax into it, cannot be forced, and it cannot be restricted by some arbitrary and rigid beliefs about right and wrong.<sup>64</sup> It is about each of us following our own path, our own Truth, in learning to align with the Truth that is Love. Burney suggests the goal is to be in the process of healing and to choose a partner who is also in the process of healing. Then we have the opportunity to achieve some true emotional intimacy and to have some

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Burney, Robert. *The Dance of the Wounded Souls*, Joy to You & Me Enterprises, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., September 1995

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

companionship on our journey. The person who can support us in our journey is also going to be the teacher we need to push our buttons so that we can bring to Light the emotional wounds that need to be healed and the subconscious programming that needs to be changed.<sup>65</sup>

High school students are surrounded by images and messages that preach self-gratification or self-gain. Athletes, entertainers, and musicians are constantly parading messages in regards to how much they have and how much more they want to gain. Our society endorses a “Survival of the Fittest” mindset.<sup>66</sup> Young people are taught only the best person who has more than everyone else will survive. In other words, young men learn that to be cool, you should try to have sex with as many girls as you can. This theory teaches that our nature of manhood is not determined by a committed relationship, rather by the number of women we can get into our bedrooms.<sup>67</sup> They live by a moral code that endorses premarital sexual activity as a normal activity. Sexual intercourse becomes socially acceptable and keeping one’s virginity may lead to becoming a social outcast. The relationship of mutual giving and receiving is transformed into a relationship of selfness and exploitation.<sup>68</sup>

The issue of premarital sex is a question that denominations across the country have both strong opinions and teachings. Michael Hartwig says in the book *“The Poetics of Intimacy and the Problem of Sexual Abstinence”* that traditional church teachings are positively harmful when they institutionally mandate sexual abstinence for anyone who is

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Majors, Richard; Bilson Mancini Janet, *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*, 1993, Touchstone

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

not in a heterosexual marriage.<sup>69</sup> Hartwig acknowledges that abstinence appears to be a smart choice on the surface but that it prohibits sexual maturity, and different kinds of attitudes a person must have to cultivate healthy intimate relationships.<sup>70</sup> Hartwig sees abstinence as a denial of our call to become close to people. Abstinence hampers a person's ability to relate affectionately with others. Hartwig compares the conservative Christian teachings of abstinence with a Jewish ethics that recognizes the divine mandates to be fruitful and to pursue sexual companionship embodied in Genesis chapter 1, which calls for people to "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."<sup>71</sup> There are many who feel that teaching and promoting abstinence is a terrible thing. John Bellantoni, an advocate who supports sex education in public school says "It does not work and in the long run may be doing more harm than good for the children this practice is being forced on."<sup>72</sup> Opponents argue that conservative Christian groups would rather have teenagers pregnant, than admit sex does and will take place outside of marriage and support sex education classes.<sup>73</sup> In an interview on teenage sex in America, a teenage girl told the former NBC News anchor Katie Couric "So many people say 'don't have sex' and stuff, but you go out and its like the real world." Couric agreed with the young girl saying that "sex is everywhere and the average teen sees almost 14,000 sexual references every year. But just 165 of these sex messages refer to birth control, abstinence, pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Hartwig, Michael J. *The Poetics of Intimacy & the Problem of Sexual Abstinence*, New York, p. 637

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Bellantoni, John. *Extramarital Sex and the Pill*, *Christianity Century*, February 26, 1964, p. 267-270

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> NBC News Transcripts: *Teens Today*. 2002 National Broadcasting Company, April 15, 2002



### Biblical Foundation

In the Old Testament book Hosea we find a man that loves his wife more than anything else in his life. Though he has an unending love for her, she continues to find herself in adulterous relationships.<sup>75</sup> Hosea's experience with his unfaithful wife portrayed Israel's rejection of the Lord, so the recovery of his wayward wife pictured the Lord's love for the restoration of Israel. In the third chapter of Hosea, the Lord tells Hosea to demonstrate his love to his adulterous wife once more. This gracious act would serve as an object lesson of God's great love for Israel despite her unfaithfulness.<sup>76</sup> The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman meeting at Jacob's Well also reminds us of God's redemptive love. God expresses His love to those who are abused, misguided, misinformed, and misunderstood.<sup>77</sup> In John chapter 4, Jesus encounters this young lady while waiting at the well for His disciples to return. Although Jews and Samaritans have no dealings with each other, he asks her for a drink of water. Surprised by His request the Samaritan woman begins to ask who He is. With this opening line of questions Jesus shares with her how He is the true "Living Water" that could give her life and that she would never thirst again.<sup>78</sup> She perceives Him to be a prophet and so she then inquires where worship of God was to take place. Jesus passionately but deliberately tells her that Samaritans are worshipping in the wrong place and they are not the line through which salvation would come. He correctively guides her to the true meaning and place of worship.<sup>79</sup> This redemptive grace did not judge her for past or current mistakes, rather gave her hope and a new excitement towards her relationship with God. The Samaritan

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<sup>75</sup> Henry Matthew, *Matthew's Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, v.1

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

woman's excitement continued all the way back home where she began telling family and friends how she met a man who told her all about herself. In her joy of discovery she forgot her water jar. It was more important to her now to share her new faith. This woman was no longer in bondage or guilt over past relationships; she was experiencing a new redemptive joy.<sup>80</sup>

Numerous religious denominations are struggling with sexuality issues and the Bible is an important place to start these explorations. Christian individuals who are seeking to understand the role that sexuality plays in their lives can look to scripture for insights and understanding. Without a doubt there is an urgent need for new sexual theology that will help people recognize the value of sexuality. Theologian James Nelson stated the goals of such a theology in the book *"Body Theology."* He says understanding sexual pleasure as a moral good is grounded in respect for our own and other's bodily integrity and will help us defend against the common sexual violations of that integrity.<sup>81</sup> Nelson believes in celebrating fidelity in our commitments without legalistic prescriptions. Just as today, sexuality in biblical times was a source of pleasure and intimacy as well as misery.<sup>82</sup> Nelson argues that bible stories and passages can help people identify and live according to their own values and to discriminate between sexual decisions that are life—enhancing or destructive. Those of us who are people of faith must spread the gospel and affirm that the Bible speaks of healthy and positive views on sex.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Nelson, James, *Body Theology*, Kentucky Westminster, John Knox Press, 1992, p.21

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

In the book *"The Unauthorized Guide to Sex and Church,"* Carmen Berry takes on subjects such as abortion, homosexuality, sex outside marriage, and the response to child abuse scandals.<sup>84</sup> This book traces sexual attitudes and practices in Hebrew culture as presented in the Old Testament. Berry poses questions such as "Why is the Church unable to present a united front on issues like marriage, divorce, premarital sex, teen pregnancy, and abortion."<sup>85</sup> Premarital sex was extremely uncommon in ancient Israel as compared to today. There is enough reason to think the laws of Israel condemned it very strongly. Since the New Testament commands against sexual immorality, would have been assumed that the Old Testament saint relied on the Torah for what constitutes sexuality.<sup>86</sup> Christians who follow the New Testament should see sexual immorality as including premarital sex. If it were viewed as something that was accepted why would there be a requirement that one who sleeps with an unmarried woman would have to compensate her with a bride-price, whether her father consents to let him marry her or not? (Exodus 22:16—17) While some of the requirements for Levites serving in the tabernacle and temple were elevated beyond other Israelites, the command to marry a virgin is grounded in the principle that he not profane his children (Leviticus 21:13—15)<sup>87</sup>, which suggests there's at least something less perfect about such a marriage.<sup>88</sup> Deuteronomy 22 treats premarital sex as a form of prostitution, and though the law only has a penalty for the woman, that's likely because the women can establish virginity in ways that men can not. When they marry and it is discovered that they are not virgins,

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<sup>84</sup> Berry, R, Carmen, *The Unauthorized Guide to Sex and Church*, 2005, W. Publishing Group

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

they are liable to death.<sup>89</sup> In verse 21 we are told that the non-virgins sin is “zanah,” sometimes translated with the force of committing harlotry, sometimes with the force of being promiscuous. From the context, this law applies to all premarital sex regardless where it involves prostitution. Going to a prostitute is a sin just as much as being a prostitute is, and if it is prostitution then the man is as guilty as the woman.<sup>90</sup>

### Old Testament Thoughts on Sex and Marriage

In Exodus 22:16—17 states “When a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged to be married and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her, to be his wife, But if her Father refuses to give her to him, he shall pay an amount equal to the bride-price for virgin.”<sup>91</sup> This points out the that a man involved in persuading, not forcing, an unmarried woman to have sex, causes her to become “deflowered.”<sup>92</sup> It would be difficult for her father to find a guy willing to marry a woman who was no longer a virgin. It would also be difficult for the family to obtain a respectable bride-price because this young lady would not be in a marriageable position. The Biblical passage shows a concern for what is best for an unmarried woman and her family. Part of the law indicated that the man pay three times (3x) as much and the father still had the discretion as to whether or not he would allow his daughter to marry the man. In the book of Leviticus, the Israelites were consecrated to God and holy in every aspect of their lives.<sup>93</sup> Certain sexual relationships were forbidden, including intercourse with closely related

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs: How The People of The Bible Really Lived

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

persons (incest), a woman during menstrual period, and the wife of a neighbor.<sup>94</sup> Genesis 3:24 expresses a theological conviction of the writer of the book. It is suggesting that unity and nature of marriage are willed by God. The expression “man...cleaves to his wife” indicates that they belong to each other. The expression “becomes one flesh” in verse 24 refers to more than a physical connection or sexual intercourse. It refers to the union of persons, a becoming “one” in marriage or a partnership.<sup>95</sup>

The Old Testament records laws that sought to restrict premarital and extramarital sex (Ex 20:14, Lev 20:10). In addition, homosexuality and incest were condemned (Lev. 18:6—18, 22—23).<sup>96</sup> Sexual intercourse within marriage was considered honorable (Hab13:4). In the Old Testament, a couple was to refrain during the wife’s monthly menstruation (Lev. 15:19—24).<sup>97</sup> It also states that if a husband is sent out to battle, he must abstain from sex until God gave his side victory. There are numerous amounts of stories in the Old Testament that describe the sexual conduct of the culture. Sex played an important role in the religious beliefs and practices of the Canaanites. Baal was considered to be the god of fertility, and both male and female prostitutes were kept at the temples dedicated to Baal. Through sexual intercourse they could influence Baal to give them large herds, abundant crops, and many children.<sup>98</sup>

Jobs suffering caused him to make an evaluation of his own life. One of the areas he evaluated was his attitude toward women and how he handled his own sexual desires.

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<sup>94</sup> Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

He listed the steps of his sin “looking upon a virgin” (Job 31). Job described his lust as a moral failure.<sup>99</sup>

Moses spent time with God on Mt. Sinai and afterwards, came down and sanctified the people. He made them virtually cleanse themselves and prepare to stand before God. Moses understood that the people of God could not please God with the sin in their life.<sup>100</sup> Part of this ritual meant abstinence from sexual relations for a period of three days. Some would suggest this was a sign that sex is unholy. However, it showed the difference between ceremonial uncleanness and moral uncleanness. Moses was trying to get the people of God to refrain from having sex as a way of refocusing their minds and hearts on the importance of the event they were about to witness.<sup>101</sup> On the surface, it does not appear as if the New Testament does not directly condemn premarital sex. If you look in a Greek dictionary to find the meanings of the words “fornication” or “sexual immorality,” you will find that premarital sex is included in the definitions. Sexual immorality is defined as a sin against our own bodies, and we are told to flee from sexual sin “flee from sexual immorality.”<sup>102</sup> The Bible commonly uses terms such as “knowing,” “lying with,” “uncovering nakedness,” “immorality,” and “adultery” to refer to a variety of sexual sins (Matt:15:19; Act 15:20,29; Rom. 13:13; I Cor. 6:13,18; 7:2; 10:8; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; I Thess. 4:3; Rev. 9:21).<sup>103</sup> These scriptures include all sorts of different types of sexual activity, including premarital sex, sex between people who are married to others, etc. Fornication is included in these terms and is illustrated in many translations which actually use words like “fornication” rather “immorality” in many

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<sup>99</sup> Hayford, Jack, *The Spirit-filled Life Bible*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Collins, Raymond, *The Bible and Sexuality*, *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 2004, p. 153-154

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

passages.<sup>104</sup> For the most part biblical writers and their original audiences understood that premarital sex was prohibited when these broader categories were condemned. Although the idea and fact of sex repeatedly appear in the scriptures, the word “sex” never appears (KJV and NKJV). The NKJV, however, does refer to “sexual immorality” (Matt 5: 32; Act 15:20) and to the “sexual immoral” (1 Cor 5: 9—10, Rev 22:15).<sup>105</sup> Sex is defined as the concept of male and female entering into a reproductive function as human beings, which is commonly known as “sexual intercourse.” God created mankind in His own image as “male and female” (Gen 1:27, 5:2). The act of sexual intercourse is part of God’s first command to mankind, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth,” (Gen 1:28)<sup>106</sup>. Although the primary reason for intercourse was procreation, God created mankind with a capacity to enjoy sex.<sup>107</sup>

### **New Testament thoughts on Sex and Marriage**

Jesus’ teaching concerning divorce helps us come to a better understanding of his view on sexuality and marriage. In Matthew chapter 19, beginning with verse 11, Jesus suggests that not all who remain single do it by choice. But there are those individuals that believe it is a call on their own life to voluntarily refrain from marriage in order to devote themselves to God.<sup>108</sup> “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, you were bought at a price, therefore honor God with your body.” (1 Cor 6: 18—20) “But among you there must be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Collins, Raymond, *The Bible and Sexuality*, Biblical Theology Bulletin, 2004, p. 153-154

<sup>107</sup> Life Application Study Bible: New International Version

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

kind of impunity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people" (Eph 5:3)<sup>109</sup> It is important that we make the right decision about whether or not premarital sex is included in "sex immorality." In Genesis 2:24 God said that when a husband and wife are united, they become "one flesh."<sup>110</sup> However, 1 Corinthians 6:16 the Apostle Paul argues that if a man unites himself with a prostitute then "The two will become "one flesh" We can see from both scriptures that when a person engages in sex they have become "one flesh" with that person. In the Bible, the only time that it is acceptable to be "one flesh" with someone is when you are married to that person. The implication is that premarital sex is sin.<sup>111</sup>

Paul reminds the Church that it is to be presented as a pure virgin bride to Christ. "I am a jealous for you with a godly jealousy, I promised you to one husband, to one Christ, so that I might present you as a virgin to him" (2 Cor 11:2)<sup>112</sup>

Paul also makes the statement that the "sexuality immoral" will not inherit the Kingdom of God, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor the drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God."<sup>113</sup>

In the New Testament the Apostle Paul would definitely disagree with Michael Hartwig's argument that sex out of wedlock is natural. According to Paul, just because we have inherited a gift does not mean that we have the right to abuse it. In his letter to the church in Corinth he says "Everything is permissible for me-but not everything is

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Collins, Raymond, *The Bible and Sexuality*, Biblical Theology Bulletin, 2004, p. 153-154

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.



beneficial, do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God?<sup>114</sup> Paul puts offenses such as idolatry, adultery, stealing, and slanders, all interpreted to some extent as being in violation of one of the Ten Commandments, on the same level as being sexually immorality. Paul encourages every believer to “flee from sexual immorality.”<sup>115</sup> Paul urges the Thessalonians on “how to live in order to please God.”<sup>116</sup> Paul instructed the Gentiles how to deal with spiritual non-believers; he focused on the physical body, something contrary to religious practices where much of the teachings were based solely around spirituality.<sup>117</sup> Paul took a hard stand on sexual relations, and stressed the importance of abstaining from premarital sex. Susan Reimer suggest in the book “*God Forbid: Religion and Sex in American Public Life*” that critics of this view that sex before marriage is not allowed under the Bible often point to the fact Jesus dined with prostitutes, signaling that Jesus did not think negatively of the act.<sup>118</sup> Jesus tended to associate with the societies outcasts as a way of saying, “It is not your job to judge them,” and “Look these people have asked for forgiveness, and I have granted it to them.” This gives hope to teenagers that have said they have had sex and now regret it.<sup>119</sup>

It is not surprising that most young people are unsure if it is right or wrong to have sexual relations prior to marriage, given how much teens are inundated with sexual messages and images in their daily life. Current theologians and sex educators are consistent in their view that sexual relations belong only within marriage.<sup>120</sup> Sexual

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Sands, Kathleen. *God Forbid: Religion and Sex in America Public Life*, Oxford University Press, 2002

<sup>118</sup> Reimer, Susan. Abstinence works, but to many teens never get the message, SunspotNet, July 14, 2002

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Dedek, John F., “Premarital Sex: The Theological argument from Peter Lombard to Durand.”

relationships are seen as something good and necessary within marriage, as an expression of a union and commitment between husband and wife. The scriptures give numerous prohibitions against pre-marital sex, not because as some would say “God does not want us to have fun,” rather God loves us, and knows these types of relationships are harmful.<sup>121</sup>

Sexual intercourse between a man and woman involves a very intimate physical giving and receiving of both partners. If both have unconditionally given and committed themselves to each other in marriage, then they can give themselves completely to each other in sexual intercourse without reservation.<sup>122</sup> In a premarital sexual relationship, the partners have not given and committed themselves to each other unconditionally. Engaging in this action voluntarily depicts a “lie,” “dishonesty,” and “hypocrisy.”<sup>123</sup> The person who engages in premarital sex sacrifices their dignity, integrity, and self-worth as a person. He or she acts irresponsibly, not respecting a value system that is set forth inside their belief system, community, and God. If a man and woman really love themselves and each other in a premarital relationship, they will choose voluntarily set boundaries that do not include sexual intercourse.<sup>124</sup> The person who voluntarily has intercourse does so knowing that they are committing a sin, by failing to respect the love God intended for individuals inside of marriage. Those who are created in God’s “image” are loved unconditionally and are meant to be “Temples” of the Holy Spirit. This is why it is important for believers to live according to the relationship of marriage that God has

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Theological Studies, December, 1980, p.643-667

<sup>121</sup> Cramer, Robert Nguyen. Biblical Perspectives on Premarital Sex and Homosexuality.

<sup>122</sup> White, John, Eros Defiled: The Christian & Sexual Sin, Downers, IL, Intervarsity Press, 1977, p.52-56

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

set forth. As *Temples*, the individual believer tries to discover how they can live their life pleasing God.<sup>125</sup>

In the New Testament, it was a common belief system among the first century Christians that sex is an integral part of marriage and that the spouse should be sexually available. In 1 Cor 5:1—13 Paul in his letter says,

It is actually reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles, that one of you hath his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he that had done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already as though I were present judged him that hath so wrought this thing, in the name of our Lord Jesus, ye being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ: wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators; not at all meaning with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and extortionists, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world: but as it is, I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat. For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judges. Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.<sup>126</sup>

Paul responds to a reported case of incest involving a young man sleeping with his stepmother. Paul speaks on it as sexual immorality not even endorsed by the local pagans. He criticizes the Church community for lack of action in responding to the situation and suggested that the young man be excommunicated from the Church.<sup>127</sup> This

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

is aimed at the man's salvation and to purify the community of its sinful influence. Paul continues to deal with sexual immorality in the Corinthian Church in Chapter 6: 12—20:

All things are lawful for me; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall bring to nought both it and them. But the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body: and God both raised the Lord, and will raise up as through his power. Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ, and make them members of a harlot? God forbid. Or know ye not that he that is joined to a harlot is one body? For, the twain, saith he, shall become one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committed fornication sinneth against his own body. Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? And ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.<sup>128</sup>

Paul understands that the body is the means by which the person expresses himself/herself and relates to others. In the passage Paul says the individual has a direct relationship with Christ.<sup>129</sup> The faithful Christian is related to Christ as a member of His body. The passage implies that the union between Christ and the Christian is “marital”. However, unlike the union between man and women, the relationship with Christ has nothing to do with sex. The expression “one spirit with him” stresses the super natural character of this union.<sup>130</sup> The Christian who is a temple of the Holy Spirit, a possession of Christ and not his own possession, has no right or liberty to do whatever they want with their or someone else's body. This would be considered a kind of adultery. Paul implies that sex can only be right in a marital relationship, because this was how God

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

designed it.<sup>131</sup> Having sex outside of marriage is making the body perform in an unnatural way that is contrary to the very nature of God.<sup>132</sup>

If a couple refrains from the sexual intercourse, the decision should be mutual, for spiritual reasons, and should be for only a short period of time (1 Cor 7:1—5)<sup>133</sup>. Paul describes the judgment God has for those who have sex outside of marriage. He mentions that the bed should be kept pure, which is normally viewed only inside a marriage. However, Paul says to the single person that if they can not control their sexual desires then they should get married.<sup>134</sup>

“Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”<sup>135</sup>

In 1 Cor 7: 8—9, in this passage Paul says that if unmarried people are not able to be celibate and they find themselves burning with sexual desires, then they should get married so that they do not commit sexual sins.<sup>136</sup> In 1 Cor 7:25—30, Paul offers his opinions regarding people remaining virgins. He thinks “it is well for a person to remain as he is” (v. 26). The unmarried person can give his/her mind to the things of God with little distraction, whereas, the married person has to focus on their relationship with the Lord and also their own family.<sup>137</sup> His motivation is for them to give their undivided

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Collins, Raymond, *The Bible and Sexuality*, Biblical Theology Bulletin, 2004, p. 153-154

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Henry Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

attention to the Lord. Although, Paul considers marriage a good thing to do, he would rather that believers remain virgins or celibate.<sup>138</sup>

Today many people are attached to the romantic idea of a life enriched with a variety of experiences, or a “variety is the spice of life” mentality. It may be true that variety, when talked about in regards to food, friends, or extracurricular activities may be beneficial; however, sex is uniquely different.<sup>139</sup> Sex is loaded with underlying physical and emotional attachments. The Bible teaches that sexual intercourse establishes the deepest kind of emotional and psychological bond between a man and a woman.<sup>140</sup> Love is the principle virtue in the New Testament. Without “love, I am nothing,” Paul said to the Church in Corinth.<sup>141</sup>

Somewhere over the years, our society has lost the idea that chastity is still a strong virtue. God created sex and wants people to enjoy it, but it is only beautiful under the right circumstances. Some teens may have the perspective of “testing the car before it is bought.” The answer would be how you would feel about buying a car that has been test driven by a half a dozen drivers over a period of just a few years. As the car gained age it may begin having engine problems that was unforeseeable by the future car owner. These problems may perhaps bring about challenges that could have been prevented when the car first became available on the car lot.<sup>142</sup>

Sex, marriage, and love are found throughout the Old and New Testament. The Bible as a whole presents a profound vision of God and how He has ordered sex and

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Cahill, Lisa Sowle. *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, p. 637-639

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> New International Version Holy Bible, Bible Gateway, <http://bible.gospelcom.net>

<sup>142</sup> McClymond, Michael James. *The Last Sexual Perversion: An Argument in Defense of Celibacy*, *Theology Today*, v. 57 n.2, July 2000, p. 217-231

marriage. Various books of the Bible talk about things such as: self-love, purity, holiness, accountability, discipline, self-control, chastity, and obedience to God. The Bible in no case approves of sex outside of the marriage. Non-marital sex include: adultery, prostitution, fornication, homosexuality, incest, and bestiality. Ultimately, the plan of God is to empower believers both men and women to love as he does and walk faithfully in their relationship with Him.<sup>143</sup>

Throughout much of Church history there has been a desire to split the human person into two distinct substances: body and soul. In the Christian Church the soul was aligned with spiritual things while the body was aligned with worldly things. The body was understood as being sinful in that it was the reason why people were distracted in pursuing spiritual things. This theory led Christians to be suspicious of the body, because it could lead someone away from the spiritual realm. From this point, it is clear why sex became a target of concern by theologians. There are several theological perspectives that will be treated here to some extent. John Chrysotom and Augustine of Hippo views will be considered because of their enormous influence on Christian thinking, writing, and theology. Although writings from each of them cover many subjects, the focus here will be on sex, marriage, and love.

### **Natural or Healthy**

In this section there will be some views mentioned which see sex, including premarital sexual intercourse, as natural or healthy. One of the reasons for having sex most overlooked is that of pressure. The problem is that some teens find themselves not

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

performing up to everyone else's standards and this reflects on them. They tend to feel like they are not capable of doing a certain thing. As this cycle progresses, the one thing a young person can do is have sex, whether it be to release tension or to have a sense of doing something they have total control over.<sup>144</sup> One of the biggest reasons for having sex prior to marriage is the overwhelming need to feel close to another human being, to make emotional contact, to gain a sense of self-worth, to keep from being lonely, and to feel cared for. Many young people, even though they are still in school, view themselves as fully mature. Because of this feeling, they want to engage in so-called "adult activities" such as smoking, drinking, and having sex. It would be tough to explain to them why they should not be involved in sex if they see themselves as adults and then look around and see what others adults are doing. Still others may have sex to become mature. They think if they have sex they will somehow magically become adults.<sup>145</sup>

The belief that sex is a passage from childhood to adulthood makes it difficult to resist. Boys want to become men; girls want to become women.

In his book *"The Family: An Introduction,"*<sup>146</sup> J. Ross Eshleman thinks that most people can be classified in one of three different premarital sexual standards. The three are:

- 1) Abstinence
- 2) Permissiveness without affection
- 3) Double standard

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Bird, Joseph and Louise, *Marriage is for Grownups*, Garden City, NY, Image Books, 1971, p.22- 23,45,49

<sup>146</sup> Eshleman, J Ross, *The Family: An Introduction*, Boston, Allyn and Bacon, Inc. 11<sup>th</sup> ed., 2005, p.355-360



With respect to “permissiveness without affection” and “double standard” he says “premarital intercourse is right for both men and women regardless of the amount of affection or stability present, providing there is physical attraction.”<sup>147</sup> Other sociologists such as Anthony Kosnik have agreed with Eshleman and maintain “that sexual expression is an important and healthy human experience because it provides enjoyment, enrichment, and a release of tension.”<sup>148</sup> Even apart from any expression of intimacy or intent to have children, physical pleasure is an important part of the human experience. He suggests that intercourse is the healthiest and most beneficial expression of human existence.”<sup>149</sup> Again, other sociologists have agreed with the idea to young people having premarital sex. Dr. Richard Simons says, “The impulses of adolescents are intense and demand some outlet. Adolescents are physically mature and yet, in the structure of our society, they are certainly not psychologically mature. They are incapable of supporting themselves; however, they feel the pressure to discharge.”<sup>150</sup>

These sociologists argue that young people need to release themselves from the pressures around them, so in having sex they feel somehow discharged.<sup>151</sup> However, these sociologists do not look at the consequences sexual intercourse has on the individual and others. Many young people are physically capable of sexual relations, but are not yet ready to meet all the responsibilities of marriage. Some would argue that sex is natural and healthy, whether one is married or not. We first have to determine if it is a “need” or necessary for human survival, health, or fulfillment. It is not necessary that a person have sexual relations to meet his or her needs. Many celibate people of both sexes

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Simons, Richard, *Understanding Human Behavior in Health and Illness*

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

and various ages are healthy and fulfilled in their lives. It can be said that some who are celibate may be healthier and fulfilled than those who are engaging in sexual intercourse. A part from marriage there is no security in a sexual relationship. There may be a spoken commitment, but if one partner refuses to make the commitment final through marriage, words are just words.<sup>152</sup> Sex without commitment automatically bypasses the stages of acceptance, security and significance, and goes straight to someone on a performance basis. That person is not accepted as being a unique person who is loved no matter what, but instead has value only as he or she performs and puts out. The sociologists, who think teens should have sex, fail to realize the human capacity to be aware of and respond to morally relevant personal values.<sup>153</sup>

Morals that pertain to sexuality include the dignity of persons, justice, friendship, self—giving love, truth, fidelity, health, procreation, human life, and God.<sup>154</sup> We are called to live as responsible human beings and to respect and promote such things according to the nature of our faith. Therefore, views that attempt to justify premarital sexual relations as “natural instinct,” or “really no big deal,” dehumanize sexuality.<sup>155</sup> Such views fail to take into account the important role values and morals have on sexuality. Those who see sexual relations as a way of becoming mature or a passage into adulthood have a serious misunderstanding of what real maturity and being a responsible adult mean. The measure of a being a mature man or woman is not whether one has had sexual relations, but whether a person is a well-integrated person who acts and loves

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<sup>152</sup> McDowell, Josh and Dick Day, *Why Wait? What you need to know about the teen sexuality crisis*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> White, John, *Eros Defiled, The Christian & Sexual Sin*, Downers Grove, IL. Intervarsity Press, 1977, p. 52-56

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

responsibly.<sup>156</sup> Maturity involves healthy self-control and waiting for the appropriate time and place for things, including having sexual relations. A premarital relationship is neither the appropriate place nor time for sexual relations. Robert Fox writes in his book *“Charity, Morality, Sex and Young People”* that a person who has premarital sex voluntarily fails to love responsibly, both oneself and others.<sup>157</sup> He believes that from a Christian faith perspective, the question of whether or not something is “natural” or “healthy,” including premarital sex, lies within who we review and function in our relationship with God. God created us as sexual beings and so heterosexual attraction is natural.<sup>158</sup> However, the sexual relations of people can only properly correspond in “nuptial” and “procreative” meanings within a loving marriage. It is “natural” and “healthy” for men and women to marry and have sexual relations within marriage.<sup>159</sup> Young men and women are physically capable of sexual relations and often have strong sexual desires and emotions long before they are mature enough for marriage. In his book *“The Christian Meaning of Human Sexuality,”* Paul Quay says, “A young person has to learn to compete and gain control of his or her sexual drives and desires before he is ready to give himself totally in marriage. Sexual intercourse is a symbol of love. But a person who may not love himself may find it hard to express genuine love for someone else.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Fox, Robert, *Charity, Morality, Sex, and Young People*, Charity, Morality, Sex, and Young People, Manasses, Trinity Communications, 1987, p. 79-87

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Quay, Paul, *The Christian Meaning of Human Sexuality*, Evanston, IL. Credo House Books, 1988

### Is It A Right?

Some people claim that individuals have a right to engage in sexual intercourse, as long as the individuals involved consent, whether or not they are married. Albert Ellis in his book *"Sex Without Guilt"* supports the theory that there are members of our society that feel premarital sex is not wrong if people involved consent.<sup>161</sup> He suggests that the two people involved have the right to share sexually and enjoy premarital sex if they both want to and consent; those who do not want to have premarital sex do not have to have it, and if others choose to have it they can do so without being in love. Their view is that premarital sex is a private affair that is up to the couple involved and no one else should judge them.<sup>162</sup> These views are almost similar to abortion or the pro-choice people have been debating in regards to a woman having an abortion. They basically hold that one has a right to whatever one wants or chooses as long as it does not harm anyone else or interfere with another's rights.<sup>163</sup> With regard to basic human rights, Leah Curtis says, in her book *Nursing Ethics: Theories and Pragmatist*, "We have certain needs that must be met if we are to continue to be. We need food, water, rest, shelter, and protection from those elements that could harm us. On the emotional level we need love and to be loved, to learn and teach, to understand and to be understood."<sup>164</sup> She continues by saying "... there seem to be no limits to human wants. Part of the problem is that we confuse what human beings need with what they want."<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Ellis, Albert, *Sex Without Guilt*, New York, Lyle Stuart, p. 189-190

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Curtis, Leah, *Nursing Ethics: Theories and Pragmatist*, Bowie, MA Brady Communications Company, Inc., 1982, p.4, 7, 14-15, 17.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

### Teenagers Face Greater Risk of STDs

There is no question that the fruits of the sexual revolution have been devastating to the most recent generations. There is only one message that offers health, hope, and joy when it comes to sexual involvement. The Church has to be the vehicle that advocates for single people to save intercourse for marriage. Sex is a wonderful gift, but if uncontrolled, it has the capacity for evil. Our bodies were not made to have multiple sex partners.<sup>166</sup> An individual saving him or herself sexually can avoid almost all risk of STD and out of wedlock pregnancy. Delaying intercourse until young people are older is not a naïve proposal. Over 50% of the females and 40% of the males between 15 and 19 have not had intercourse<sup>167</sup>. They are living proof that young people can control their sexual desires. Young people are willing to discipline themselves for things they want and desire. Females get up early for drill team or cheerleading practice. The males attend football and basketball camp. Each day people make a decision not to shoot someone, jump off a cliff, and rob a local bank. Young people can be disciplined in their sexual lives if they have the right information to make the right choices.<sup>168</sup>

When teen-agers start having sex earlier in life, they are much more likely to have multiple sexual partners, a behavior that puts them a great risk of acquiring a STD. If most of them have sex prior to becoming 18 years of age, they will more than likely have had more than 2 sexual partners.<sup>169</sup> As the teen-ager gets older the more sexual partners they will have come in contact with. Again, as mentioned before, these current

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<sup>166</sup> Penner, Clifford & Joyce, *The Gift of Sex: A guide to Sexual Fulfillment*, 2003, W. Publishing Group.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> STD Facts, African-American Disporportiatly Affected by STD's, Center For Disease Control, December 5, 2000

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

generations are not the creators of the sexual revolution. There is only the bi-product of generations prior that enjoyed a sexual atmosphere of free love. Some young people have parents who may have had multiple sexual partners and never came in contact with a sexually transmitted disease, so they may feel safe.

“Fornication is voluntary sexual intercourse between a man and woman who are not married to each other. The Greek word for “fornication” (porneia) could include any sexual sin committed after the betrothal contract.”<sup>170</sup> The sexual ethics of young people today is an example of how difficult it is to make social and moral judgments. The Christian perspective goes beyond what is right or wrong. The issue of chastity is only one aspect of the larger sexual problem that confronts teens.<sup>171</sup> The other side is the kind of ethical norms that the Church and secular community can agree upon. The Church must play a role in helping youth find constructive solutions to the problems of premarital sex. Pastors should pay particular attention, but the churches need to advocate revisions in sex-educations programs, with special focus on how to make sexual decisions. Past programs all often assumed answers and did not allow young people the opportunity to practice making their own decisions within a safe climate.<sup>172</sup> The Church needs to make teen-agers more aware that sexual activities are not exclusively private affairs, but that they have social and ethical consequences. The problems of teen-age sexuality and the fact that some groups have put these problems on their own agendas, suggest that it is urgent for the mainline denominations to recover a credible voice within our community.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Trent Butler, *Holman Bible Dictionary*

<sup>171</sup> Winner, Lauren, *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*, 2005, Brazos Press.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

Churches must become more active in what the shaping of public policies has to do with teen sex education. Sex programs are needed that will go beyond a negative reinforcement that has sometimes come from our pulpits and address the total human needs of young people. Our countries experience has taught us that social solutions can be found to serve health and welfare needs of people, enabling them to live better lives. At a time when there is a growing controversy over sex education in schools and churches, abortion clinics are overrun with young teenage mothers looking for creative methods of birth control. The voice of the mainline Church has become soft spoken and intimidated by conservative political groups. It's as if the Church chooses not to speak on the subject and allows the radical groups the only opportunity to voice concerns. The Church has found it difficult to talk open and honest about sex issues and seem to have become powerless to provide leadership in matters of sexuality.<sup>174</sup>

The mainline Church seems to have lost their prophetic voice in matters of sexual morality and have forgotten how to affirm the goodness of sex within its proper relationship. Teen-agers, especially those who are marginal to church, need the Church to be with them in their sexual matters. The belief that young people will learn from their mistakes seems to also be a myth. The Church has had a history of endorsing sex within marriage only; however, we teach and talk to our teens as if we are beginning a new message.<sup>175</sup> We approach this group with soft Bible scriptures and hope that this secures their virginity. Teens today already know the traditional attitudes towards sex. What they do not understand is the true nature of sexual desires and how to give direction to that desire, which at their age is normal and natural. What the church community sometimes

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<sup>174</sup> Quebein, Nido, What works & What doesn't work in Youth Ministry, 1989, Colorado Springs, Merwether Publishing Ltd., p.83-85 and 101-105.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

assumes is that sex education and frank and open discussions of the facts of sexuality will contribute to increased teenage activity. Although peer pressures are great at this age, youth generally act out what they perceive to be adult values. Most young people's values are more aligned with the adults in their lives. Young people are only producing a seed that has planted in their culture and environment by older adults.<sup>176</sup> What is often overlooked in discussions of teen-age sex is that the young people today are not the creators of the sexual revolution<sup>177</sup>. Rather, they are the recipients of a sexual heritage that has been passed down from their grandparents. Although these individuals are now our church leaders, they have misplaced the seed that has grown into a younger sex driven culture. Our churches have to introduce programs of education that need to be consistent with the actual practices and attitudes of the larger society. We cannot look the other way with influences like MTV, BET, and other vehicles that drive a younger sexual revolution. Most adults are more conservative about sexual values in their adulthood than younger people. They believe that this sexual phenomenon is a fad in our community and it's a rebellion among young people trying to find themselves.

Sexual practices can never be examined and understood independently of other social factors. Young people today are socially pressured to be sexually active long before they have been prepared educationally and psychologically to deal with deep personal relationships.<sup>178</sup> As mentioned before, television, music, and other vehicles of media, fill the air with romantic images and sounds of male-female relationships.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Reich, Wilhelm, *The Sexual Revolution*, New York, Orgone Institute Press, p.129-149

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Weil, Sabrina, *The Real Truth about Teens and Sex: From Hooking Up to Friends with Benefits: What Teens are Thinking, Doing, and Talking About, and How to Help Them Make Smart Choices*, Seventeen Magazine, 2005

<sup>179</sup> Kunkle, Dale, et al, 1999, "Sexual Messages on Television Comparing Findings From Three Studies", *The Journal of Sex Research*, v.3, p.230-236



These messages suggest a myth that someone will be swept away in love and fulfillment of sexual urges. Among friends, teen-age boys are pressured to “score” with the females in order to prove his manhood with the other guys. The faith community must address these issues underlying teen-age behavior. Our challenge in this context is to articulate the view that sexual intercourse is not a casual venture but a special form of intimacy that calls for an ongoing relationship and concern for one another, as well as, for the new life that might emerge.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this project is to reach urban youth with sex education information as well as, the identification of the underlying risk factors and development assets which will lead to changed behavior and a sustainable commitment to sex inside of marriage. The author desires to increase sexual awareness among high school-aged teens through sex education sessions. These sessions will take place at three (3) different locations, Living Word Bible Fellowship, United Faith Community Church, and Gahanna High School. The author will lead the session in Living Word Bible Fellowship and Gahanna High School. Dr. Gerald Saffo will lead the discussion with teens at United Faith Community Church. The author plans to create verbal communication about students, parents, teachers, and church leaders. The first step in developing information and research on teen sex in this model will be to survey the teens on their present knowledge regarding sexual issues. Data shows that teens that are less educated about the consequences of premarital sex become involved in sexual activity at an earlier age, often resulting in teenage pregnancy. The data generated from the sessions will test the hypothesis and create an educational class that brings both youth and parents together.

The author enlisted the participation of individuals of different age groups to serve as contextual associates. The contextual associates are to encourage and support the author's plans to administer a survey and pre/post interview, and to distribute and collect the completed assessments. The participants are asked to fill out questionnaires that do not reveal their identity. The author wants to receive honest and truthful answers to the

questions posed on this survey. Youth tend to be more open and motivated to answering questions when they are not singled out or judged for their actions. The youth will also participate in group sessions. These sessions promote personal and corporate opinions. The sessions offer choice, promote the uniqueness of an individual, learning, and change. People are open toward personal transformation when involved in an interactive group discussion experience.

In the beginning of this project, the author met with the context associates to establish an action plan and implementation procedures. Over the project timeline the author passed out forty-one (41) questionnaires to youth, who attended Living Word Bible Fellowship, United Faith Community Church, and Gahanna High School. The author was able to inform the Living Word Bible Fellowship and Gahanna High students prior to passing out the questionnaires. The author's research protocols feature a questionnaire, and pre-and post survey questions that were designed using cohorts of equivalent target and control groups. Five (5) measurements will be taken of impacts within each session. One baseline measure will occur before interventions are made and two post-intervention observations will occur. The major research hypotheses are listed below:

1. Encourage youth in the focus groups will to enroll in a sex education program.
2. Youth in focus groups will have a greater understanding that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease.

3. Youth in the focus groups will demonstrate a greater understanding of the social psychological and health gains to be realized by abstaining from premarital sexual activity.
4. More youth in the focus groups will report they have refusal and assertiveness skills necessary to resist sexual urges and advances.
5. More youth in the target group will commit to abstain from sexual activity until marriage.

Parents will be asked to sign consent forms which will authorize the author and contextual associates to collect this data. The form will indicate the measures that will be taken to protect the anonymity of all interview data. Therefore, it will not be possible to link individual responses to specific youth and confidentiality will be maintained.

Prior to Session 1, youth will be given a sexual awareness questionnaire. This questionnaire will give the author an assessment of the student's knowledge and personal characteristics about sex. At the end of Session 1, students will be given a pre-survey interview to measure attitudes regarding sexual awareness. This session will utilize sex education material designed to target urban teenagers in school and community based settings and address the importance of protecting one's community, as well as oneself, against the potentially negative consequences of unsafe sexual intercourse. Consisting of three, one-half to one hour sessions, these sessions combine HIV/STD education, behavioral skills training, sexual abstinence education, risk recognition, and contraceptive awareness. The youth in this setting will learn to clarify their own values about sexual decisions and to practice skills to reduce risk taking. The primary goal of these sessions is the promotion of safe sexual behaviors. These group sessions will consist of videos, role-

playing, interactive sessions, and games. Through discussion in small groups of 12—18, youth will learn the risks of unsafe sexual behaviors.

#### Group Discussions Components:

- Session 1. The aim of this session is to educate youth about HIV and STD's to prevent infections. Specific goals of HIV/STD prevention are to help youth learn how to resist social influence to engage in risk-taking behavior.
- Session 2. This session is designed to educate youth on the benefits of not engaging in pre-marital sex. The goal is to teach young people to abstain from sexual intercourse until they are ready to establish a mutually monogamous relationship within the context of marriage. This session also allows parents to join their child in the discussion. The author's goal is to teach creative methods of communicating between parents and youth.
- Session 3. This session's goal is to educate and inform the youth about how to use contraceptives correctly and help teenagers develop skills in communication and sexual decision making so that sex does not just "happen." Teens will become aware of the consequences of having a child at a young age. This session will encourage teens to talk to parents or healthcare providers for additional help with contraceptives.

These students are encouraged to be in attendance on the day the sessions would take place and to return the questionnaire to the author or contextual associate. The author received back thirty—one (31) completed responses. The questionnaire has four

(4) closed—ended responses to collect demographic data in the following areas:

- Gender
- Age
- Grade
- Race

The purpose for the questions was to determine the current nonsexual or sexual activity of the participants and their level of understanding of different risk factors. This questionnaire was designed to measure the knowledge of sexual interaction by different ages, genders, grades, and races. The youth were able to complete the questionnaire with multiple choice-styled answers. The text, Dr. Stephen J. Genuis, M.D. and Shelagh K. Genuis, *Teen Sex Reality Check*, uses stories, case presentations, and current medical research. This book addresses the issue of STDs and teen sex, the factors predisposing adolescents to risky sexual behaviors and the various strategies used to address the challenge of early adolescent sexual involvement.<sup>1</sup>

Sex Education does not limit its focus to young students in the schools where other programs have been implemented. Dr. Richard Dinah in *Has Sex Education Failed Our Teenagers?* says that over the past ten years extensive research has been conducted on school-based sex clinics and comprehensive sex education programs. The research shows that not only have these programs failed to reduce teenage pregnancy, but have been correlated to an increase in adolescent sexual activity, abortion, and sexually transmitted diseases. *Has Sex Education Failed Our Teenagers?* consolidates much of this research and gives positive guidance based on statistical findings. The book brings to

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<sup>1</sup> Genius, Stephen J, M.D. and Shelagh K. Genuis, *Teen Sex Reality Check*, Winfield House Publishing

light the statistical evidence of success in directive abstinence—based programs, and includes a summary of available programs.<sup>2</sup> One of the dynamics of having the sex education sessions in a church environment is equipping parents with skills and strategies to reach their own children with healthy messages that will encourage the young people to make good decisions for their future lives. Within sex education, it is not a “just say no” message. The sex education environment provides things that will prepare the student not just to say no to something, but to say yes to their future and help them to look beyond having a baby at 16 or 17 years of age.

There are several existing programs in the Central Ohio area. Directions for Youth offers a program titled “My Best Self” which provides teens with pregnancy prevention information. This program is designed for boys and girls, ages 10—18 in school and community based groups. Youth are referred by school and community site personnel. Pregnancy Decision Health Center provides abstinence education programs (five day curricula) to middle and high school students throughout Franklin and Fairfield counties. Frontline Communications is the last of three organizations that provide abstinence education to youth in the Franklin County area.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dinah, Richard, Ph.D., *Has Sex Education Failed Our Teenagers?* Focus on the Family Publishing

<sup>3</sup> Ohio Health Department, 2001, *Ohio Abstinence Education Report*, p. 31

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

Based on the author's analysis of the assessments and group discussion results, there is a need for sex education programs in the church whereby youth, parents, and church leaders can engage in healthy communication. Living Word Bible Fellowship has attempted to create classes and other projects to encourage youth development. Through weekly Sunday school classes, retreats, and fun activities, the church has done an outstanding job bringing youth together to learn more about how to grow in their Christian faith. The author, with the help of the context associates, evaluated the responses from the youth and parents and determined continued conversations and discussion needed to continue long after the project is completed. For the purpose of the project, this was a one-time event. However, the author and other leaders agreed that sex education activities would be planned on a continuous basis.

The author, with the help of contextual associates, scheduled several sessions with youth and parents. The purpose of these sessions was to determine the knowledge of youth regarding sexual relationships. The author served as the facilitator of the discussions in all but one group gathering. As the instructor, it was helpful to encourage positive attitudes and feeling about the sex education project. This is important in order to provide a climate of trust and open-honest communication among all generations regarding a particular topic.

The first sessions were held in the health education classes of Gahanna High School, which is a suburb on the northeast area of Columbus, Ohio. The students who



participated in the discussion ranged from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The students sat in their assigned seats while the author instructed the students on the purpose of the project. The students took a brief moment to fill out the questionnaire forms. The discussions lead right into the sexual climate and activity that this age group now faces in America. Most students did not want to talk about their own sexual experiences; however, it became obvious that most of the students in the room had some level of sexual contact. The discussion led to talking about their friends and some of the negative experiences they had gone through when having sex for the first time. Some students said they were aware of people who had sex at parties, school, and other public places. They also talked about how some females in their earlier years in school had abortions or whose parents quickly put them on birth control in fear that they would get pregnant. All of the students confessed that they were aware of STDs and HIV and how they are transmitted. The students were aware that the author was a Pastor of a Christian church; however that did not hinder their candid conversations about sexual relationships. The students were conditioned through previous speakers about youth and sex topics. The author was not the only person during the school year to visit the class and talk about the consequences of premarital sex. With the past instructors and help of the health teacher, these students were more receptive to discussions about sexual relationships. In some cases, the author noticed that students were very participative, almost as if they had something they wanted to talk about, but did not have an environment for discussion prior to this one.

The second group the author met with was the youth in Living Word Bible Fellowship. These discussions were held on Sunday morning during the Sunday school classes. With the help of the contextual associates, the author was able to encourage some

youth who did not actively participate in Sunday school to come out and take part in this discussion. During the first session, the youth filled out the questionnaire and returned them to the author. The author observed that this group was shy and reluctant in their conversations about sex. The author worked hard to get the youth to begin talking on their own about their relationships and their awareness of STDs. After about ten (10) to fifteen (15) minutes, the youth began opening up about how they felt about sexual intercourse. In this environment, the youth were aware that the author was the Pastor of the Church, however, many of the young people answered honestly about their involvement in sex and how they felt about the consequences. Based on the interview surveys, the author became aware that many of the youth had a limited knowledge about some STD's.

This group came together again the following Sunday with their parents in attendance. The parents were aware of the project and were happy to participate. The author observed that it was the first time for many parents to attend Sunday school class and that attendance included men and women of all ages. During the discussions, the majority of feedback came from the parents, especially the fathers that were in the audience. The author noticed that many of the youth felt uneasy discussing sexual issues in front of their parents. At one point one of the men motioned to his daughter to answer a question, she quickly froze and did not respond. The father said that he and his daughter had a close enough relationship where they could talk openly about sexual issues. In the previous discussion group, this young lady was very vocal; however, in this instance she was very quiet. The group talked about different issues regarding teenage sex, but only a few actually monopolized the conversation. The author posed the question, "When is it

the right time to discuss with your child about sex?” Each parent talked about their discussions with their own child and when they thought the right age was an appropriated time. Some felt between the ages of 6 to 10 were appropriate age to have this discussion. They were surprised when the author shared statistics that showed the average parent waits until their child is between the ages 16 to 17 to have their first discussion about sexual relationships.

The last session included the author, contextual associates, and the teenage youth of the Church. This discussion was designed to talk about future steps of handling sexual decision-making. The author had the youth do role-playing and realistic scenarios to encourage them on how to make the right decisions. This discussion also included topics on how to communicate with parents, youth leaders, school counselors, and other adults. The group was encouraged in the first session to write down questions anonymously and turn them into a safe box. These questions would be addressed in the third session.

The third group was hosted at the United Faith Community Church. The author was not present with this group, which was led by Dr. Gerald Saffo. During this session, some of the parents in the church indicated they were apprehensive about their teens filling out the questionnaire. The author had several discussions with Dr. Saffo and both determined that although the church was familiar with the author, they had some reservations about participating in a project that they were not so familiar with. There were some feelings of discomfort in talking about such issues in the Church. Although these teens were given questionnaires, their non—responses are not being included in the data of this project.

The author used several Sunday morning worship services to reinforce the nature of the project. The sermon series were based out of First Corinthians chapter 6, verses 10—14. Paul place emphasis on the notion in verse “our bodies our not our own.” Paul identifies the believer’s body as a “place where God dwells.” In the Old Testament the chief priest was described as the only person who could enter into the Holiest of Holies, which was the Holy Temple. Paul draws us to this illustration that God wants to dwell in us, as he did the Holy Tabernacle. During the Bible study, the author asked congregants about their feelings towards the messages in this series. All said they were amazed at the frankness and openness of the sermon, and although they had never heard the topic in the church, it was one that challenged and reminded them of the principals in making good decisions. On one occasion the author received a call from a member who said she used the sermons as a measuring rod in her own life. She mentioned that had she heard the sermons a few months prior to them being preached, she would have been ashamed of her life, however, she made a decision to live out those things preached about, and had decided to not have sex until marriage.

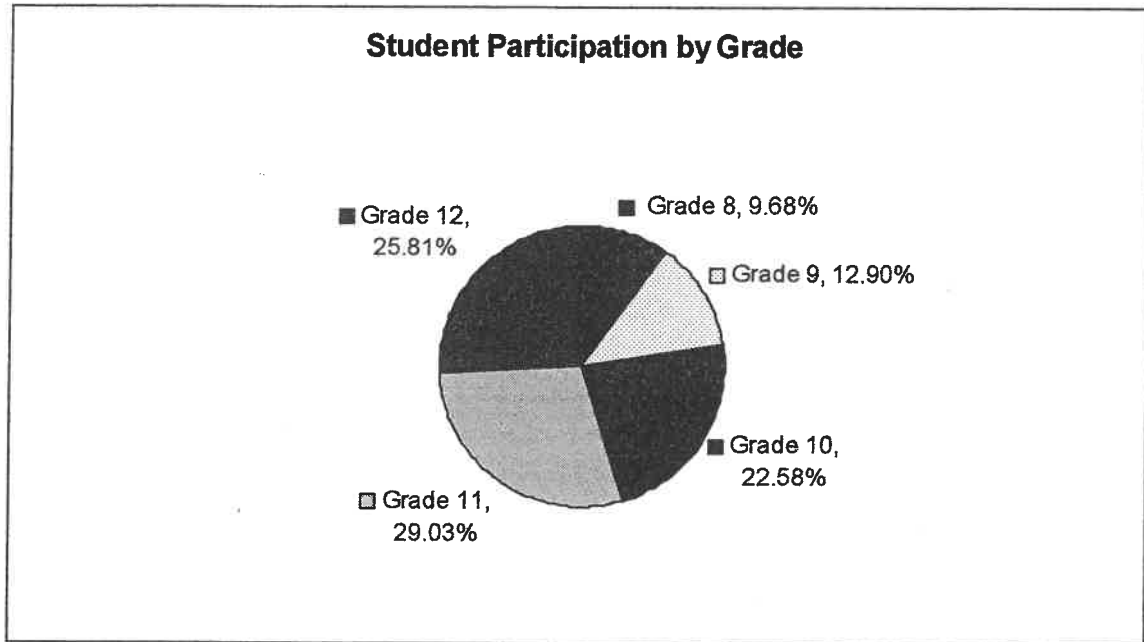
The purpose of the Bible study series was to look at what the Bible has to say about marriage and Christian maturity. The author used selected verses in Genesis and First Corinthians chapter 7 to discuss the nature of the husband and wife and also the single individual. It was through the Bible study series, the author was able to teach participants the virtues of marriage and benefits of abstinence. The Bible studies gave participants a chance to discuss the nature of sex and marriage from a Biblical perspective. The Bible study included mostly adults over the age of 20; however, these

adults had children and wanted to learn what scriptures they could use when discussing sexual issues with their young person.

The graphs below represent the data collected from the students which participated in the sex education sessions. The data was collected from the questionnaires and surveys in which students filled out anonymously. The measurement of change and impact had taken place in just a short time period and does not represent a reoccurring evaluation. The data recognizes the non respondent group that did not fill out the questionnaire.

Figure 1: Student Participation by Grade

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>% of Total Group</b>
Eight	3	9.68%
Nine	4	12.90%
Ten	7	22.58%
Eleven	9	29.03%
Twelve	8	25.81%
	31	100.00%



**Figure 1: Student Participation by Grade**

Figure 2: Student Participation by Gender

Gender	Number of Participants	Percent of Total Group
Male	17	54.84%
Female	14	45.16%
	31	100.00%

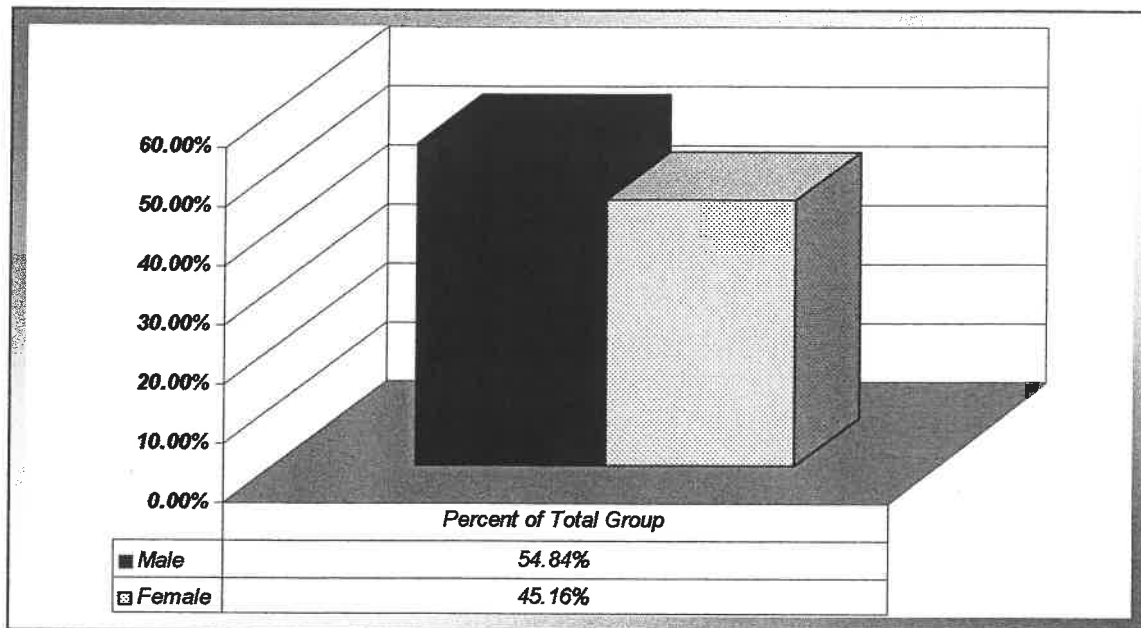


Figure 2: Student Participation by Gender

Figure 3: Participants by Race who are aware of AIDS/HIV

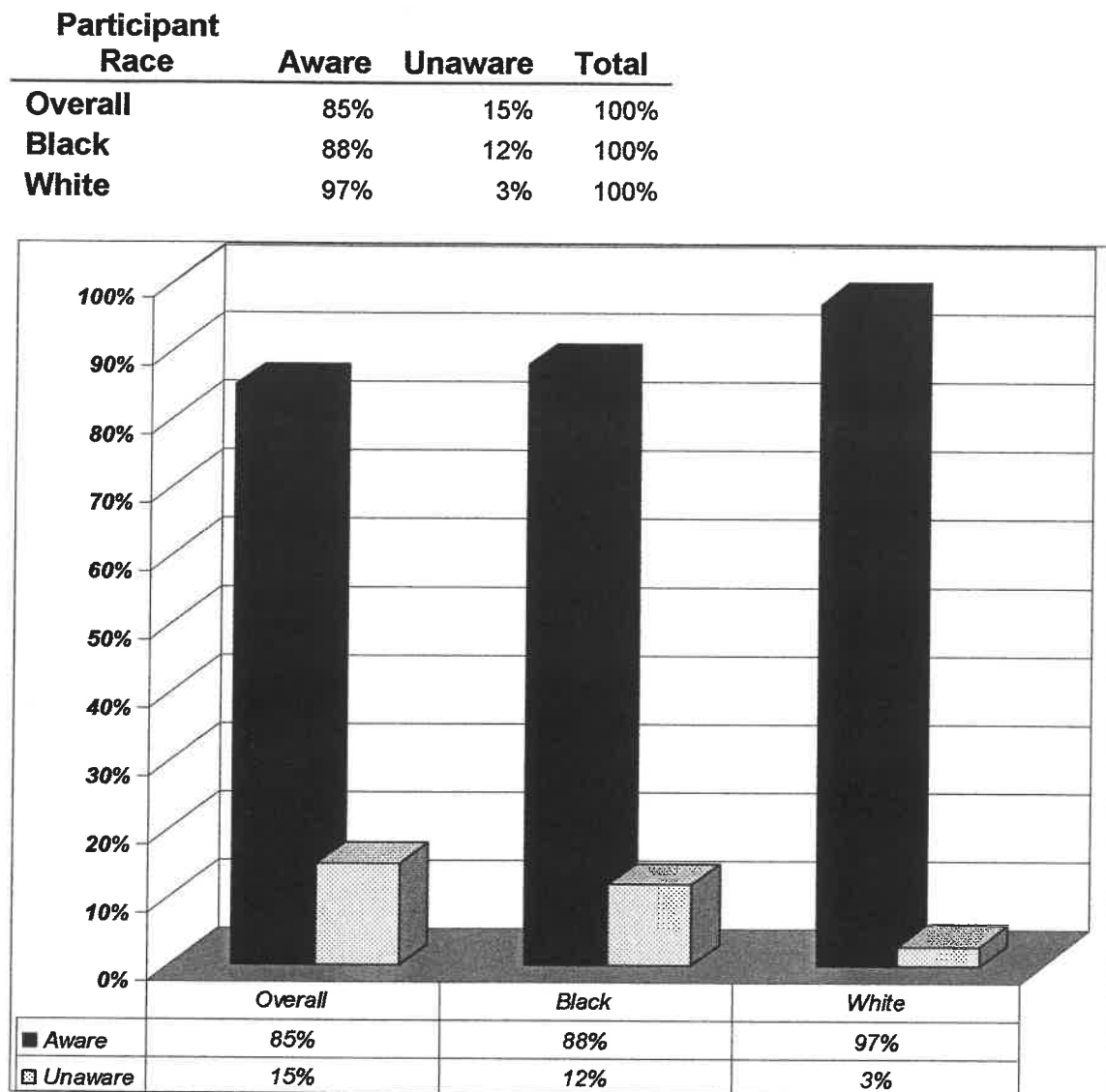


Figure 3: Participants by Race who are aware of AIDS/HIV



Figure 4: Breakdown of Overall Sexual Activity

Description	Percentage
Percent having sex	52%
Percent not having sex	46%
Unknown/No response	2%
	100%

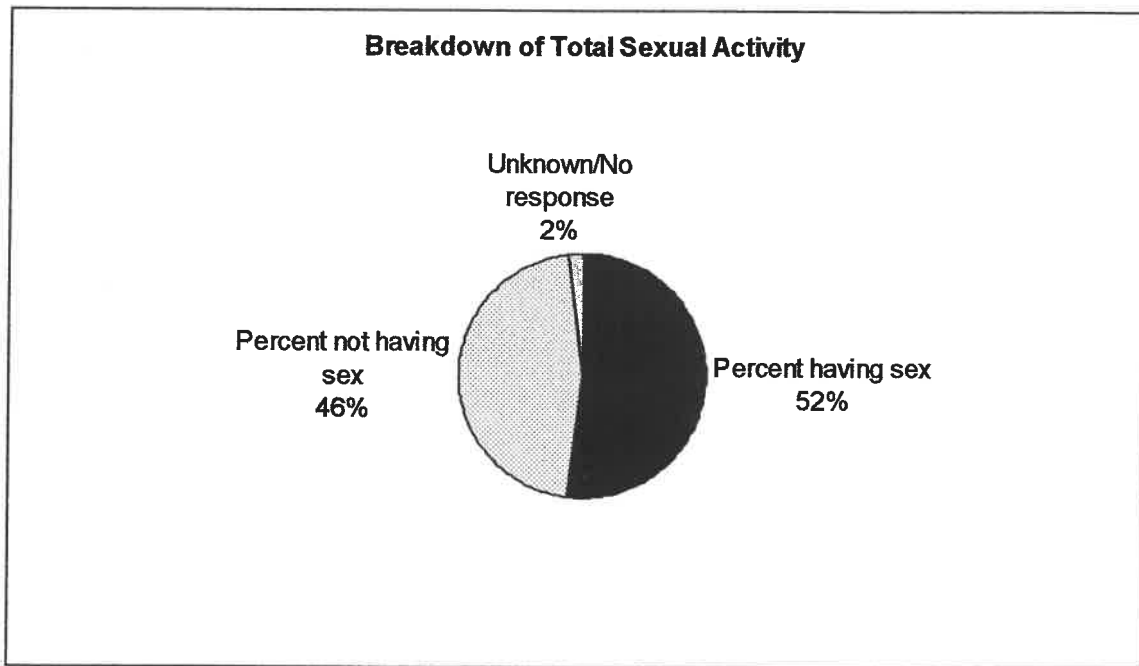


Figure 4: Breakdown of Total Sexual Activity

Figure 5: Sexual Activity by Race vs. Overall

Race	Total of Participants	Currently	Percent by Race	Percent of Total
African-American	19	9	47%	29%
Caucasian	10	7	70%	23%
Non-Respondents	2	No data	0%	0%
	31			52%

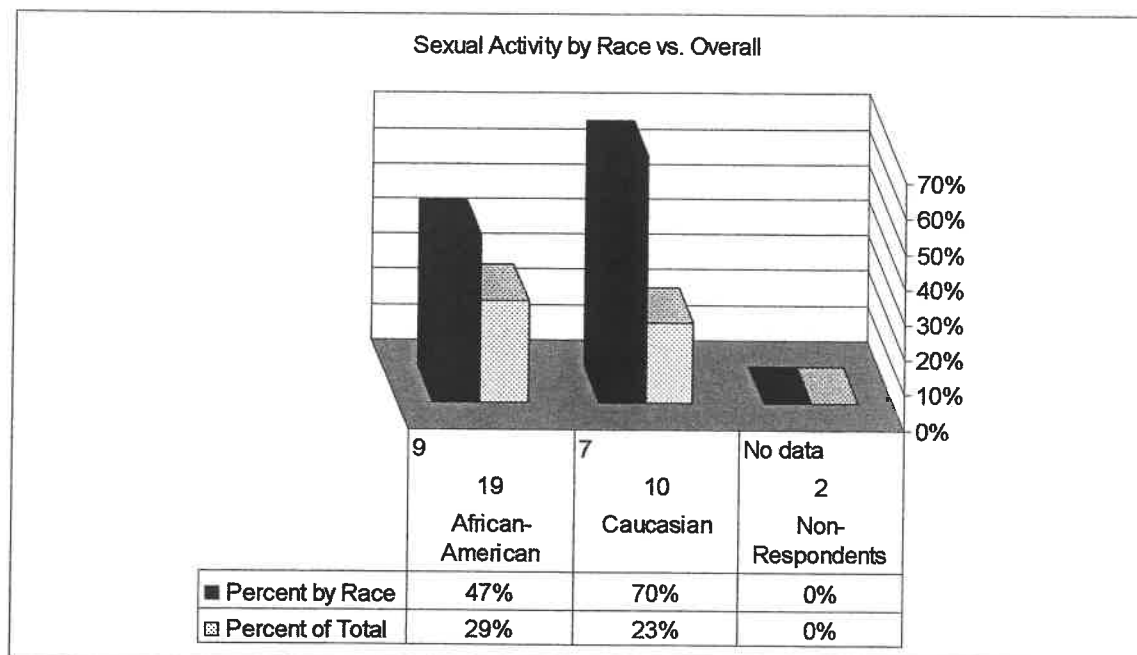


Figure 5: Sexual Activity by Race vs. Overall

Figure 6: Sexual Activity vs. Condom Usage

Total from Group Experiencing Sexual Activity	Percent Experiencing Sexual Activity	Total Using Condoms
16	52%	13

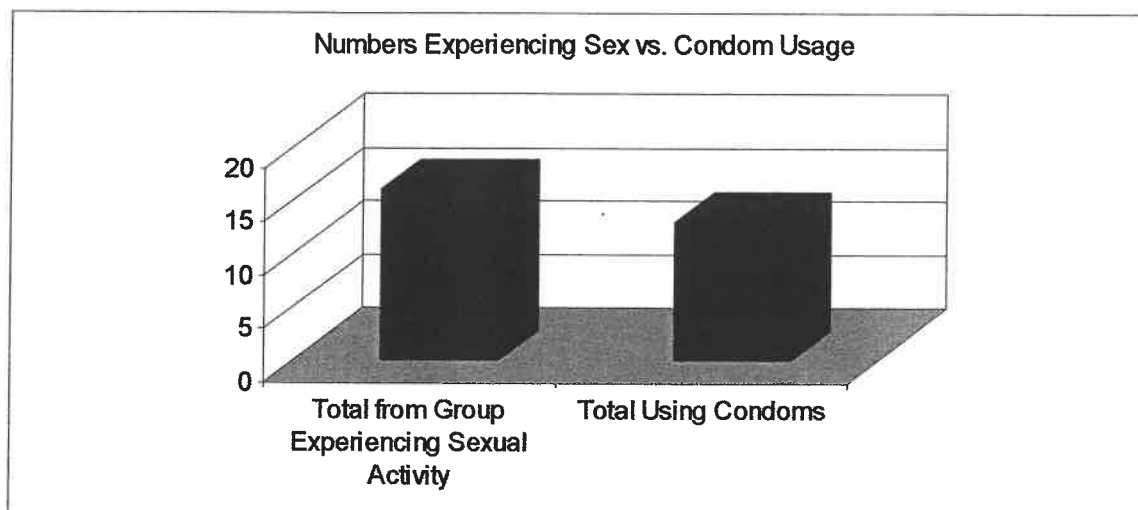


Figure 6: Sexual Activity vs. Condom Usage

## CHAPTER SIX

### REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The mainline Church seems to have lost its prophetic voice in matters of sexual morality and has forgotten how to affirm the goodness of sex within its proper relationship. Joyce and Clifford Penner in *The Gift of Sex: A Guide to Sexual Fulfillment* write a guide to understanding sexuality and how it fits into God's design for marriage. This book features a section on the consequences of addictions surrounding the internet and transmitted diseases.<sup>1</sup> Teenagers, especially those who are marginal to the Church, need an environment that promotes sexual learning and awareness. Some believe that young people will learn from their mistakes and will learn how to make good decisions as they grow older.<sup>2</sup> Several studies of young unmarried mothers have found that between 20 and 25 percent became pregnant again within two years (with the rate much higher among minority groups).<sup>3</sup> The repeat pregnancy appears to be related to a lack of knowledge about risks of sexual intercourse, limited opportunity for further education, boredom with home life and the unavailability of strong male or female support.<sup>4</sup>

The Church has the history of endorsing sex within marriage only; however we need to conversion within the Church in which our teens can hear updated information involving consequences.<sup>5</sup> The Church has approached this group with subtle Bible scriptures and has hoped that this secures their virginity until marriage. What our

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<sup>1</sup> Penner, Clifford & Joyce, *The Gift of Sex: A Guide to Sexual Fulfillment*, 2003, W Publishing Group

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Sandford, John & Paul, 1992, *The Transformation of the Inner Man: "The Role of The Christian Counselor"*, Tulsa, Victory House, Inc. ch.7.

teenagers do not understand is the true nature of sexual desires and how to give direction to that desire, which at their age is normal and natural. The Church community sometimes assumes sex education mixed with open-minded, honest, truthful, and upfront conversions about sex will contribute to increased teenage sexual activity. Although peer pressures are great at this age, youth generally act out what they perceive to be adult values.<sup>6</sup> Young people are only producing a seed that has been planted in their culture and environment by older adults. What is often overlooked in discussions of teenage sex is that young people today are not the creator's of the sexual revolution.<sup>7</sup>

To successfully decrease the rate of teenage pregnancy on the far-eastside of Columbus, Ohio, it is imperative that the community at large is involved in this mission. There are a number of agencies with similar goals on presenting information to the parties at risk. The author hopes this project will open doors for these agencies to partner with local churches.

Ongoing and sustained communication between parents and their teens will help prevent teen pregnancy, and consequences of premarital sex. The more parents talk to their children about responsible decision-making, the less likely those children are to engage in sexual intercourse as adolescents. Studies show that youth with little support from their parents have more problems in school and are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs, than teens that have strong parental support.<sup>8</sup> The first steps to a successful sex education program are helping developing avenues of communications between youth

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Reich, Wilhelm, *The Sexual Revolution*, New York, Orgone Institute Press, p. 129-149

<sup>8</sup> Miller, B.C. (1998) *Families Matter, A Research Synthesis of Family Influences on Adolescent Pregnancy*.

and parents. The best programs offer parents the opportunity to share their experiences with other parents, reassuring them that they are not alone in their difficulties.<sup>9</sup>

The vast majority of American support sexuality education for teenagers –93% believes it should be taught in schools and by other community organizations.<sup>10</sup> During this project there were youths who expressed the need for more access to medical information.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

**APPENDIX A**  
**SEX EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

## SEX EDUCATION TEEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Administered by: Rev. Kevin S. Hairston

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Male/Female \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you ever been taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not sure
2. Have your parents or other adults in your family, ever talked with you about what they expect you to do or not to do when it comes to sex?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not sure
3. Have you ever had sexual intercourse?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. How old were you when you had sexual intercourse for the first time?
  - a. I have never had sexual intercourse
  - b. 11 years old or younger
  - c. 12 years old
  - d. 13 years old
  - e. 14 years old
  - f. 15 years old
  - g. 16 years old
  - h. 17 years old or older
5. At the time you first had sexual intercourse, how old was your partner?
  - a. I have never had sexual intercourse
  - b. 5 or more years younger than me
  - c. 3 to 4 years younger than me
  - d. About the same age
  - e. 3 to 4 years older than me
  - f. 5 or more years older than me
6. During your life, with how many people have you had sexual intercourse?
  - a. I have never had sexual intercourse



- b. 1 person
  - c. 2 people
  - d. 3 people
  - e. 4 people
  - f. 5 people
  - g. 6 or more people
7. During the past 3 months, with how many people did you have sexual intercourse?
- a. I have never had sexual intercourse
  - b. I have had sexual intercourse, but not during the past 3 months
  - c. 1 person
  - d. 2 people
  - e. 3 people
  - f. 4 people
  - g. 5 people
  - h. 6 or more people
8. Did you drink alcohol or use drugs before you had sexual intercourse the **last time**?
- a. I have never had sexual intercourse
  - b. Yes
  - c. No
9. The **last time** you had sexual intercourse; did you or your partner use a condom?
- a. I have never had sexual intercourse
  - b. Yes
  - c. No
10. The last time you had sexual intercourse, what one method did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy? (Select only one response.)
- a. I have never had sexual intercourse
  - b. No method was used to prevent pregnancy
  - c. Birth control pills
  - d. Condoms
  - e. Depo-Provera (injectable birth control)
  - f. Withdrawal
  - g. Some other method
  - h. Not sure

11. How many times have you been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant?

- a. 0 times
- b. 1 time
- c. 2 or more times
- d. Not sure

12. Have you ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?

- a. Yes

**APPENDIX B**  
**THE “WHY WAIT” QUIZ**

**THE "WHY WAIT" QUIZ**  
Administered by: Rev. Kevin S. Hairston

**Directions-** Read each statement below and circle **True** if the statement is accurate or **False** if the statement is inaccurate.

1. A woman can get pregnant by having sex only once.  
TRUE                  FALSE
2. There are only six sexually transmitted diseases.  
TRUE                  FALSE
3. If you use a condom every time you have sex, you won't have  
to worry about pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease (STD).  
TRUE                  FALSE
4. Most high school students have sex at least once.  
TRUE                  FALSE
5. If you do not marry a person, it's still okay to flirt with, touch,  
and kiss him or her.  
TRUE                  FALSE
6. HIV and AIDS are the only incurable STDs.  
TRUE                  FALSE
7. You can tell by looking at a person whether they have an STD.  
TRUE                  FALSE
8. In God's eyes, pornography isn't as bad as having sex before marriage.  
TRUE                  FALSE
9. Ninety percent of cervical cancer is caused by HPV (human papilloma  
virus), an STD.  
TRUE                  FALSE
10. Powerful antibiotics can cure genital herpes.  
TRUE                  FALSE
11. It's okay to have sex with a Christian as long as you are planning  
to get married some day soon.  
TRUE                  FALSE

12. Some STDs are harder to detect until they do a lot of damage.  
TRUE FALSE
13. You can be safe from STDs if you are a virgin and marry a virgin, and  
neither of you have sex with another person, and you both avoid injected  
drugs and infected blood transfusions.  
TRUE FALSE
14. Taking the birth control pill faithfully every day will protect you from STDs.  
TRUE FALSE
15. Living together before marriage is a good taste to see if your marriage  
would be happy.  
TRUE FALSE

**APPENDIX C**  
**THE “WAY WAIT” QUIZ ANSWER KEY**

**APPENDIX C: “WHY WAIT?” QUIZ ANSWER KEY**

Administered by: Rev. Kevin S. Hairston

1. TRUE
2. FALSE
3. FALSE
4. FALSE
5. FALSE
6. FALSE
7. FALSE
8. FALSE
9. TRUE
10. FALSE
11. FALSE
12. TRUE
13. TRUE
14. FALSE
15. FALSE

**APPENDIX D**  
**PRE-ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW SURVEY**



**PRE-ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW SURVEY**

Directions: Please complete this survey and return to Pastor Hairston or drop inside the confidential box. All information will be kept confidential. Please fill in the appropriate information.

Male/Female \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_

1. What in your opinion is the biggest reason why teens get pregnant or get someone pregnant?

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2. Are both of your parents actively involved in your life? If not, which parents do you spend a majority of time with?

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3. On a day-to-day basis, are you concerned about sex and pregnancy or are they low on your list of worries?

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4. Many people think it is important to be a virgin until marriage. Do you agree?

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5. Does your school offer sex education classes? If so, do you find them useful?

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6. How much of a role do you think drinking and drugs have played in you or your Friends' decisions about sex?

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7. Do you think that your friends are more sexually experienced than you or less?

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8. React to this phrase "Parents are their children's first and best educators on sex"

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9. Do you think your church or faith community should have classes or programs that discuss sexual information?

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10. What do you like or not like when your parents talk with you about sex?

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**APPENDIX E**  
**POST-ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW SURVEY**

### POST-ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW SURVEY

Directions: Please complete this survey and return to Pastor Hairston or drop inside the confidential box. All information will be kept confidential. Please fill in the appropriate information.

Male/Female \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_

1. Some teens say that sex is okay as long as you are in a committed and loving relationship. Do you agree?

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2. Do you think there is more pressure for young teens to engage in sexual activity than there was in the past?

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3. Have you ever heard of genital HPV? If so, please describe.

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4. React to this statement "I'm getting a clear message from my parents and other adults in my life that teen pregnancy is wrong". Do you agree?

5. What is the main reason some teens do not have sex?

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6. About what percent of our closest friends are virgins? Please circle closest possibility.

- |        |         |
|--------|---------|
| 1. 10% | 5. 75%  |
| 2. 20% | 6. 90%  |
| 3. 30% | 7. 100% |
| 4. 50% | 8. None |
| 5. 60% |         |

7. Do you think that people should wait until they are married to have sex?

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8. Are you familiar with the form of birth control called Depo-Provera (sometimes called "the shot")?

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9. Whose responsibility is it to protect against pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted diseases?

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10. Has any of the sex education information influenced your decision to have sex. If so please explain?

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## **APPENDIX F**

### **SERMON 1: SEXUALITY, IMMORALITY, AND PURITY**

**SERMON #1—Sexuality, Immorality, And Purity**  
**Hebrews 13:4**

It's not common that you'll find it. It's not popular if you say it. The "in" crowd does not believe it. A preacher will be criticized if he reminds you of it. But here it is:

God's plan for sex includes 1 man and 1 woman, within the marriage relationship.

Over \$450 million will be spent this year on sex-ed, most of it centering on what has become known as "safe sex". There is no sex safer than sex within God's plan!

The world's version of safe sex is not based on morality at all. Their theme is: "if you can't be good, then be careful".

God's version of safe sex is abstinence until marriage,

I Peter 2:11

dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul...

Biblical morality is laughed at, belittled, called archaic, and old-fashioned.

Entertainment: Rarely in daytime TV will you see lovers who are married to each other.

If it's not pre-marital sex it's extra-marital sex...

Advertising: Sex is the #1 seller of everything from beer to perfume to jeans, toothpaste, and breakfast cereal.

“appeal to mankind's baser instincts”

In the '60's, Hugh Hefner said, “sex is a normal function of the body, it is a desire that man shares w/ the animals, just like sleeping or eating, therefore it is not wrong to satisfy these normal desires”.

Society has swallowed that philosophy, hook, line, and sinker. “Just throw off all your inhibitions, and if it feels good, do it.”

As kids we were taught evolution in the classroom...and now we are acting like it. If you tell a teenager that they are an animal for long enough, he will eventually prove you right!

Josh McDowell is one of Christianity's foremost experts on teenagers.

His research shows that in evangelical church circles:



65% of teens have had some kind of sexual experience before the age of 18. 43% say they have actually gone all the way.

He asked them where they learned their values in this area, and 73% said, "from the movies."

The good news is that of the 35% who had no experience, the vast majority said the reason was because of a commitment they have made to God.

I'm thankful for a handful of teens who say today, from this day forward, I will abstain until marriage...I will live by God's plan.../adults who recommit to purity/faithfulness.

A Senator in Washington once said, "today's teens are just hormone hurricanes, and you can't stop a hurricane."

I'm thankful for a power greater than a hurricane, He's the Creator of that hurricane, He's the One that kept my wife and me pure for each other, and He's our powerful God!

We've allowed Sex to become a dirty word. What should be a beautiful picture of love, marriage, and home, it's now associated w/ words like perversion/aids/prostitution/lesbianism/homosexuality.

Society is learning that there is a penalty for sexual immorality. But rather than coming back to God's standards, and obeying God's laws, society says, "Let's see what we can

do to alter the consequences of our actions.”

Abortion: unwanted pregnancy? Just do away w/ the consequences!

Don't let anyone get in the way of you having a good time!

## SEXUALITY/PURITY

### Sexuality

Sex is not a dirty word. Teenagers: your generation did not discover sex. God originated it for the benefit of all, within His guidelines.

Parents: Don't make faces at me for using the word sex. Your kids are hearing lies about it every day and today they will hear the truth.

Older folks: Don't look so holy at me for talking about God's gift...you're here because of it. (There has been only 1 virgin birth and you're not it!)

Heb. 13:4 (on screen) "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled."

Listen carefully: When a man and a woman enter into a marriage contract, the seal of that covenant is their union physically. To give away your virginity before marriage is far more serious than you ever thought possible...as you give away the seal to your marriage contract.

Someday you will fall in love for real with someone and marry them, and you will wish with all your heart to give them the most wonderful gift you ever could, your purity, but I, remind you today you can only give it away one time!

Married couples: Just as the physical union w/in marriage seals the covenant of marriage, so a union outside of your marriage w/ anyone else is what breaks the covenant.

Sex is not a physical act alone. There is a spiritual and emotional dimension to sex. If you leave them out, then you lower it to the level of animals.

That's what the pornography industry is doing. Making women into things, objects to be used. "Bunnies" & "Pets" -Just animals. Never mind that you have feelings and a soul and a heart.

I Thess. 4:3 "for this is the will of God that ye should abstain from fornication." (Pre-marital sex)

## **APPENDIX G**

### **SERMON 2: LIVING IN A SEX CRAZED SOCIETY**

## Living In A Sex-Crazed Society

### I Corinthians 6:13

Now—there's not a day that goes by -- that you and I don't think about these areas of our lives...

AND THE TRUTH IS...

--most of us -- if not all of us-- struggle in these areas...

we struggle to find the answers...

we struggle to find good role models...

we struggle to get control of these areas...

And any one of these areas has the potential -- if mis-managed.... If mis-handled.... If mis-guided..... any one of these areas has the potential of destroying our lives.... Or at least really messing things up...

Good news--- God has a lot to say about all 3 of these areas....

(did you know that?) A lot to say about ... sex.... Money... relationships...

--because He understands how important these areas are...

So—over the course of the next 3 weeks-- going to look at each of these areas...

Specifically – we're going to look at some strategies that God provides....values – principles--- that we can apply to each of these areas---

SO THAT---- we can experience wellness – not just in these areas—but in the entirety of our lives--- that's what God wants for us...

--he wants us to be happy--- he wants us to be fulfilled .... He wants us to experience life to the max.... and he also shows us how

so—let's just dive right into this first area..... area of SEX...

Now—I think first of all – we need to begin with a Foundation...

Begin with Some basic understanding – about what God teaches us concerning this area.... And I think some of this might pleasantly surprise some you...

#### **(1) God created us as sexual beings.**

He understands everything we go through in regard to this area...

--because he has created us this way.... He's wired us up this way...

God has created SEX... What a great God.... J

He's created us to be sexual beings.... So he understands...

(2nd thing we need to understand foundationally....)

(2) Everything God created is good!

In the book of Genesis—God looked at everything he created—and he said—“It is good!”

And SEX... regardless of what you've been taught... or regardless of what you've experienced.... Is GOOD! It's good by God's design....

Let me just say this.... Everything God has created – is meant to be good for us.... (including sex).... BUT-- everything God has created also has the potential--- to be bad for us...

(3) God has designed safe & healthy boundaries.

For everything God has created—he had also given us boundaries...  
---and when we stay within those boundaries---- it is always good!

Now this is where God gets the bad rap – “always wanting to squash all our fun...”  
“What we can do—what we can't do

Truth is-- we all need boundaries...

Ex. If you're a parent-- you place certain boundaries around your children...  
Why? --Not to take away their fun and happiness--- but to ensure that they remain safe and happy...

Illus: I don't even remember this—but when I was very young-- mom & Dad said—  
“don't touch the stove”-- but having the adventurous spirit that I have—and realizing that they were just trying to take away all my fun and happiness.... I reached up and placed my hand squarely on a red hot burner...

Now—I disregarded the boundary that my mom & dad placed around me—and what happened.... I GOT BURNED.

And that's what happens when we step outside of the boundaries that God places around us as well...

Now-- what are the boundaries that God has placed around us in regard to SEX?

Here it is: Sex is to be enjoyed within the context of a monogamous male & female marriage relationship.

That's the Biblical boundary... that's God's standard...

Now—here's the problem.... We don't like someone else setting the boundaries... We want to be the boss—we want to be the one who sets the boundaries around our lives—we don't want any one else (incl. God) telling us what the boundaries ought to be in our lives... Because ultimately we think we know what's best for us...

The problem with that line of reasoning is-- when you don't have A STANDARD you really only have chaos...

And God knows this-- that's why He says—here's the standard (boundary) -- if you choose to live outside of this-- -- you will only experience chaos...



## **APPENDIX H**

### **INTRODUCTION TO SEXUALITY LESSON PLAN 1**

## INTRODUCTION TO SEXUALITY LESSON PLAN # 1

**Purpose:** To introduce the concept of sexuality and provide an opportunity to identify messages about sexuality

**Procedure:**

1. Explain that the group will explore definitions of and messages about sexuality.  
Acknowledge that it is normal for some teens to feel a little embarrassed or uncomfortable. Point out that in our society, although we hear about sexuality all the time in music, television programs, and movies, people often do not have serious discussions about the subject.
2. Write the word "Sexuality" on the board or newsprint. Ask for definitions and write the responses on the board or newsprint. Avoid clarifying what sexuality is or is not.
3. Tell the teens they will work in groups to spend a few minutes thinking about what they have heard about sexuality.
4. Give the following instructions:

Each group will have a different assignment. Group One will list what their parents have said about sexuality. Group Two will list what their friends have said about sexuality.

Group Three will list what they have seen or heard about sexuality through the entertainment media—movies, music, magazines, and television.

5. Clarify that it is okay to list whatever they have heard or seen. There are no rights or wrong answers in this activity.

6. Have the teens count off by three. Form groups in three different areas of the room.
7. Give each group a marker and newsprint. Assign "parents," "friends," or "media" to each group. Tell teens they have five minutes to brainstorm, as discussed above.
8. Circulate and give suggestions to help groups start. (For example, friends might say, "Everyone is having sex." Parents may have said, "Sex should wait for marriage." A common media message is "You'll be attractive to guys/girls if you use our product.")
9. Conclude the activity using the Discussion Points below.

**Discussion Points:**

1. How are the messages from parents, friends and the media similar? Different?  
Why do you think that is so?
2. Which messages do you agree with? Disagree with?
3. Can you think of any sexuality messages you have heard from other sources, such as religious teaching, romantic partners or health teachers?
4. If you were a parent, what is the most important sexuality message you would give your child?
5. Are there messages you think are incorrect and that you want more information about?

## **APPENDIX I**

### **SEX EDUCATION LESSON PLAN 2**

## SEX EDUCATION LESSON PLAN#2

### **What is the benefit of abstinence?**

**Purpose:** Participants will define abstinence and identify skills to make sexual abstinence work.

**Planning Notes:** Abstinence is the only 100 percent effective method for avoiding unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Teens—especially young teens—should be encouraged to delay sexual initiation. Educators should acknowledge the importance of abstinence and provide youth with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to make abstinence work. Educators should also plan lessons to discuss other areas of reproductive and sexual health, including contraceptive technology. Even youth who pledge to remain abstinent need information about contraception and condoms to help them prevent unwanted pregnancy, HIV and other STDs when they do become sexually active. Research indicates that information about contraception does not increase sexual activity nor hasten the onset of sexual initiation in teens.

### **Procedure:**

1. Introduce the activity by pointing out that failure to make good decisions about sex is one of the reasons teens can become infected with HIV, other STDs and/or experience an unplanned pregnancy. Explain that one decision teens can make about sex is to not have it—to abstain until they are older.

2. Ask teens to define abstinence. Write their responses on one of the newsprint sheets. If the youth do not make the following points, make them yourself:
  - a. Abstinence is a deliberate decision to avoid something. People choose to abstain from many different things, such as sweets, meat, candy, tobacco products, voting, alcohol and/or other drugs, and/or sexual activities.
  - b. People choose to abstain for many different reasons, such as health (avoiding sweets or fat), personal religious beliefs (avoiding meat, alcohol), commitment to a cause or person (abstaining from voting and/or participating in some behaviors), fear (of punishment, of negative consequences), and disinterest.
  - c. People define sexual abstinence in many different ways. For one person, it may mean no physical contact with potential partners—no kissing, no holding hands. For another, it may mean abstaining from one particular behavior, such as avoiding vaginal intercourse. For the purpose of this exercise, abstinence should mean having no sexual intercourse: vaginal, oral, and/or anal.
  - d. Discuss religious beliefs, personal beliefs, not ready for sex, want to wait until married, want to wait until out of high school, risk of pregnancy, risk of STDs, don't want to jeopardize goals, relationship with parents, not in love, peer pressure, not interested.
3. Ask the class to discuss the reasons listed. Ask the teens to evaluate if each reason is a "good" or "bad" reason in their opinion to choose abstinence. Validate

that people have different reasons for choosing abstinence and that each should be valued and respected.

4. Explain to the group that abstinence is only 100 percent effective if used consistently and correctly. Ask teens what they think you mean by that statement.
5. Conclude with the following discussion:
  - a. Given what we learned today, do you think that there are some good reasons to choose abstinence from sexual intercourse?
  - b. Is it difficult to stick to the decision not to have sex? What are some things people can do to help themselves follow through with that decision?
  - c. What can you do to help your friends if they choose to be abstinent?

## **APPENDIX J**

### **NEGOTIATING SEXUAL RISK LESSON PLAN 3**



### NEGOTIATING SEXUAL RISK REDUCTION LESSON PLAN #3

**Purpose:** To practice communicating comfortably and effectively about sexual risk reduction

**Procedure:**

1. While *knowing* about the risks of unprotected sexual intercourse is important, the essential thing is to be able to *act* to avoid those risks when with a sexual partner. Explain that this activity will help youth to practice communicating with their partner, the first step in negotiating sexual risk reduction.
  2. Participants are divided into groups of three and distribute the packets of index cards. Ask each participant to take one index card. In each role-play, one person will bring up the subject of sexual risks with another group member and say that she/he wants to use the method listed on the card. The goal of this role-play is for one actor to convince the other actor to agree to practice the assigned method of risk reduction. The youth that the role-plays must end with positive and realistic behavior.
- While two group members act as characters, the third member should act as a "coach." The coach will make suggestions to help the actors play their roles and will comment on whether the approach is convincing. Ask all participants to take a turn being the coach.
  - Each small group has finished three role-play, members of that group will pick the most convincing presentation to perform for the entire group.

3. Youth they have 30 minutes to work together and create and practice three role-play presentations.

- How realistic was this role-play? Why?
- Which character was more convincing? Why?
- What other approach do you think might have been effective?

**Discussion Points:**

1. How did it feel to try and convince someone else to go along with your method of risk reduction? How did it feel to have someone else try to convince you? Do you think these feelings are common for youth dealing with these issues?
2. What are effective ways for a couple to discuss abstinence? The use of condoms? The use of condoms and another method of contraception?
3. What should a person do if his/her partner will not agree to a chosen method of risk reduction?
4. What skills or information do you need in order to protect yourself against unintended pregnancies and STDs, including HIV?

## **APPENDIX K**

### **BIBLE STUDY 1: THE SINGLE CHRISTIAN**

## **BIBLE STUDY #1: "THE SINGLE CHRISTIAN"**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

1. Lessons are often presented on the subject of "Home and Family" ...
  - a. Discussing the challenges of marriage and parenting
  - b. Describing the responsibilities of spouses, parents, and children
2. In many cases, little is said concerning those who are single...
  - a. Perhaps because the "nuclear" family is assumed to be the norm
  - b. Yet many are single, and may feel left out

[The Bible does have things to say about being single. As we consider what is said, perhaps it may be beneficial to begin by answering some questions...]

### ***I. QUESTIONS REGARDING THE SINGLE CHRISTIAN***

#### **A. WHY WOULD ANYONE BE SINGLE...?**

1. Some may be single by **circumstance**
  - a. Such as women who have never been asked to marry
  - b. Such as men who have not yet found a woman to accept their proposal
  - c. Such as those who are divorced, perhaps through no fault of their own
  - d. Such as those who are widowed, suffering the loss of their spouse
  - e. Such as those too young to marry, or too sick, etc.

2. Some may be single by **choice**

- a. Perhaps they prefer the single life on its own merits
- b. Perhaps they have chosen to remain single for other reasons
  - 1) Jesus said some would be single for the sake of the kingdom
  - 2) Paul considered his singleness a "gift from God" - cf.
  - 3) Some may simply not be drawn toward the opposite sex

3. Sometimes, **circumstances** make being single the best **choice**

- a. As in times of persecution
- b. Or in times of war, tragedies

**With so many possible reasons, we should be careful not to presume why one is single**

**B. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO BEING SINGLE**

- 1. Freedom from care
  - a. As in times of distress or persecution
  - b. In such times, it is a blessing not to have to worry about a spouse and children
- 2. Freedom to serve the Lord
  - a. As Paul describes in

- b. There are opportunities to serve the Lord that may not be as open to with familial responsibilities

### **C. WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES TO BEING SINGLE...?**

#### **1. The danger of temptations**

- a. Physical desires can be strong
  - 1) If so, then one should not be single by choice
  - 2) Marriage is for those who don't have the "gift" of singleness
- b. If single by circumstance, one needs to be extra careful
  - 1) They may not have the help of close supervision by other family members
  - 2) It is more tempting when no one is looking!
  - 3) They need to be extra sure to lean on the Lord

#### **2. The danger of loneliness**

- a. Not to be confused with solitude, which many single people enjoy
- b. Loneliness can lead to depression, which can render one ineffective in the service of God

#### **3. The danger of self-centeredness**

- a. Living alone, it is easy to become set in one's own ways
- b. One may soon forget of the how or need to accommodate others

## ***II. COUNSEL REGARDING SINGLES IN THE CHURCH***

### **A. TO THOSE WHO ARE SINGLE...**

1. Utilize the advantages of being single
  - a. Use your freedom to increase your service to God
  - b. Don't be selfish with the extra time and freedom you have
  - c. Don't begrudge others who may not do as much as you because of their other responsibilities
2. Watch out for the dangers of being single
  - a. Temptations - make an effort to develop a close relationship with the Lord
  - b. Loneliness - accept invitations to be with others, initiate opportunities to be with others
  - c. Self-centeredness - offer yourself in service to others; be flexible
3. **Remember that you are in the "family of God"**
  - a. You have many mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and children
  - b. Make the effort to develop and utilize these relationships

### **B. TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT SINGLE...**

1. **Be receptive** toward those are single by **choice**
  - a. If they have the "gift of God" for singleness, don't consider them strange

- b. Thank God for His diversity of gifts to His people
  - c. Utilize those who use their singleness for increased service to God
2. **Be understanding** toward those who are single by **circumstance**
- a. The challenges they may face due to no choice of their own
  - b. The temptations they may face living the single life
3. **Be sensitive** toward all who are single, whether by **choice** or **circumstance**
- a. Their need to be part of our "family" in Christ
  - b. Their need for friendship and involvement in our activities

### ***III. CONCLUSION***

1. No matter what our station in life, God can give us the strength and wisdom to lead productive and joyful lives!
2. If you are single, and your service to Christ has been hindered by misconceptions...
  - a. Either your own
  - b. Or those of others



## **APPENDIX L**

### **BIBLE STUDY 2: MAKING WISE CHOICES**

## **BIBLE STUDY #2: "MAKING WISE CHOICES"**

1. One lesson is the importance of "Making Wise Choices" in our lives...

a. Lot made a choice as to where to live, and as a result he experienced:

- War and kidnapping - Gen 14
- Oppression and torment by the ungodly citizens of Sodom - 2 Peter 2:7-8
- Loss of all his possessions, death of his wife, and incest with his daughters - Gen 19

b. David chose to commit adultery with Bathsheba, and as consequence he suffered:

- The death of his infant son - 2 Sam 12
- A daughter molested by her half-brother - 2 Sam 13
- That son killed by her vengeful brother - 2 Sam 13
- A rebellion led by that son, who shamed him publicly, and whose death brought even more grief to David - 2 Sam 15-18

### ***I. CHOICES WHICH GREATLY AFFECT OUR LIVES***

#### **A. CHOOSING JESUS...**

1. Will you follow Jesus or not?

a. Will you become His disciple?

b. Or will you refuse to accept His gracious offer of salvation - Mt 11:28-30

2. This one decision will affect your life more than any other!

a. It will determine your place in eternity

b. It will have a bearing on every other decision you make

- 1) As a disciple, you will be concerned with doing His will
- 2) As a disciple, you will not simply "do your own thing" - Mt 28:18-20

## **B. CHOOSING A CAREER...**

1. Even from a worldly viewpoint, your choice is important
  - a. The job market is always changing
  - b. The wrong choice could lead to financial ruin or fiscal hardship
2. More importantly, the choice can have a lasting effect on:
  - a. Your marriage and family
  - b. Your service to God
3. Make the choice to honor God first, and you will be blessed - Mt 6:33
4. Make money the primary factor in your decision, and destruction will follow - 1 Ti 6:6-10

## **C. CHOOSING A MATE...**

1. This choice will determine to a great extent your degree of happiness - Pro 12:4
2. It will have a permanent bearing on your children and their emotional well-being
  - a. You may think you can simply divorce a person if they turn out to be a bad choice
  - b. But once you have children, there is no way to reverse the choice you made as to who is the mother or father of your children!
  - c. The children are not unaffected by the violence of divorce - Mal 2:16

## **D. CHOOSING YOUR FRIENDS...**

1. Having close friends can be a wonderful blessing – Proverbs 17:17
2. But the wrong friends can be a curse - Pro 12:26; 1 Cor. 15:33

## **E. CHOOSING WHERE TO LIVE...**

1. It was this choice where Lot made his mistake
  - a. It appeared to be a sound business decision - Gen 13:10-11
  - b. But it was a poor moral decision - Gen 13:13
2. Upon what basis do we choose where to live?
  - a. Is it based solely on how much of house we can afford?
  - b. Is it based upon the location to work, school, etc.?
  - c. Do we consider whether it will help or hinder our service to God and Church?

-- There may be some modern-day "Sodom's" and "Gomorrahs" to avoid!

[For every action there is a reaction, and for every choice there is a consequence. To increase the likelihood that our choices will have good consequences, here are a few...]

## ***II. SUGGESTIONS FOR MAKING WISE CHOICES***

### **A. ASK GOD FOR WISDOM...**

1. He promises to give wisdom to those who ask in faith - Ja 1:5-8
2. Asking for wisdom requires diligence - Pro 2:1-9 -- Fill your prayers with requests for wisdom to make wise choices!

**B. ASK OTHERS FOR ADVICE...**

1. There is safety in having many counselors - Pro 11:14
2. There is wisdom in heeding the counsel of others - Pro 12:15
3. Two great sources for counsel:
  - a. The Bible itself, especially a book like Proverbs
  - b. Older, mature Christians

-- Don't hesitate to ask others what they would do!

**C. COMMIT YOUR CHOICES TO THE LORD...**

1. Trusting that you have made choices pleasing to Him, put them in His hands --
  2. Make your choices with the understanding, "if the Lord wills"
  3. One might even ask the Lord that if a choice is not according to His will...
    - a. He might frustrate the carrying out of the choice
    - b. Or to otherwise show you what is His will

-- Include God in your decision making, if you wish to make wise choices!

[There will be times when it becomes apparent that we made poor choices, even wrong ones. What can we do to avoid making matters worse...?]

### ***III. CONCLUSION***

1. May the examples of such men like Lot and David...
  - a. Teach us the importance of "Making Wise Choices"
  - b. Serve as a warning not to make our decisions lightly
2. May we ever be open to the wisdom from God and the counsel of others as we make such choices as...
  - a. Our careers
  - b. Our spouses
  - c. Our friends
  - d. Where we will live
3. Have you made the most important decision you will ever face in this life?
  - a. The decision which will determine your eternal destiny?
  - b. The decision to follow Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

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